



Feedback from Community Dialogues on Sheltered Workshop Transition Plan

The dates and locations for the community dialogues were as follows:

- August 20th, Western NY
- August 21st, Finger Lakes
- August 26th, Staten Island
- September 9th, Hudson Valley
- September 12th, Taconic
- September 17th, Queens
- September 18th, Bronx and Manhattan
- September 22nd, Long Island
- October 1st, Binghamton
- October 6th, Syracuse and Brooklyn
- October 7th, Capital District

Following is a summary of stakeholder feedback obtained from the twelve Community Dialogue sessions:

Region 1-Western NY and Finger Lakes

- Concerns were raised by parents of children in their 40s who have attended workshops for over 20 years. Their children are happy, have a sense of pride about the work they are doing, have friends and enjoy receiving a paycheck.
- Parents are looking for more details on options for what people who are not successful working in the community.
- It was suggested that workshop participants be asked if they want to work in the community.
- It was suggested that the current workshop model be changed to meet state and federal employment expectations rather than be eliminated.
- Concerns were raised about the possible emotional and psychological stress that could be caused if people must transition to competitive employment.
- Self advocates raised concerns about people with developmental disabilities working in sheltered workshops who have not been exposed to other options or to the community.
- In the Finger Lakes, a self advocate raised concerns regarding the community and the lack of understanding toward working with people with developmental disabilities.

- In Western NY, self advocates expressed a desire to work and asked parents to be more supportive but raised concerns about accessible transportation.
- It was suggested by self advocates that transportation be used as a way to maintain connections between friends as people transition from workshops.
- Concerns were raised by a provider on the limited opportunities for employment in the rural areas of the state.
- Concerns were raised by families about the ability of an individual with developmental disabilities to use public transportation.
- Concerns were raised by families about eliminating the choice of participating in a workshop. Concerns were raised about the ability of people with developmental disabilities to overcome prejudices in the community and learn new skills.
- Concerns were raised about the high unemployment rate in upstate New York.
- It was suggested that transportation be covered in SEMP rates because the cost in the long-term would be less than supporting someone in day habilitation.
- It was suggested that OPWDD focus on educating businesses about hiring people with disabilities and that there should be outreach to counties and workforce investment boards.
- It was suggested that financial incentives should be available to encourage providers to change their business model which will create jobs in integrated settings.
- Questions were raised by providers about whether manufacturing businesses were considered to be integrated employment settings. A suggestion was made to allow providers to transform the sheltered workshop space into community centers.
- A suggestion was made to educate families and people with developmental disabilities on benefits and to provide benefits training to providers.
- An advocate shared her story about leaving the sheltered workshop because she wasn't making enough money.
- Concerns were raised about high school graduates and their options since there are no new enrollments to workshops.
- Questions were raised about options for people in sheltered workshops looking to retire.
- A suggestion was made to change the timeline from six years to ten or twenty years.
- Concerns were raised about the staff in the workshops and where they will go.
- Concerns were raised by families over the high cost of transportation and job coaching and limited funding available.

- Questions were raised from providers about whether private businesses can take over sheltered workshop space can create integrated employment opportunities for individuals
- Questions were raised from providers about the new tax credit and if it will expand to not-for-profit businesses.
- A suggestion was made to utilize the Senior Companion Program to assist individuals who want to retire.
- Concerns were raised about individuals staying at home with no services if workshops are closed and the impact this will have on parents who work.

Region 2- Binghamton, Syracuse and Sunmount

- It was suggested that state funding for workshops be used to encourage providers to create alternative business models rather than cutting the funding.
- Concerns were raised by parents with children in their 40s who have attended workshops for over 20 years.
- Questions were raised by families about why New York State views workshops as segregated.
- Concerns were raised about the need for a safety net for people who may not be successful in employment and the need to provide sufficient supports on the job.
- Parents raised concerns about the NYS Olmstead Plan and language in the plan about the closing of sheltered workshops.
- Concerns were raised about the lack of jobs in rural parts of the state.
- It was suggested that OPWDD visit the people who are employed in workshops and ask them what they want.
- Concerns were raised about the type of retirement options that will be available for people transitioning from workshops and whether it would be possible for people to retire from day habilitation.
- Concerns were raised about the lack of choice available to people if they want to remain in a workshop.
- Concerns were raised about the interpretation of the Olmstead Decision and whether it requires workshops to be closed.

- Concerns were raised about the options for people who can only be successful in sheltered employment.
- Questions were raised about with whether Day Habilitation will also face closure.
- Concerns were raised about the lack of transportation in rural parts of the state and the need to fund transportation in Supported Employment.
- Concerns were raised about whether businesses are willing to hire people with disabilities.
- Questions were raised about the willingness of community members to accept people with disabilities.
- Concerns were raised about the need to more parent involvement in the development of OPWDD's Employment Plan.
- A suggestion was made to incorporation recommendations from the NYSRA white paper into the Employment Plan.
- Questions were raised about how employment services will be delivered once OPWDD moves to managed care.
- Concerns were raised about individuals seeking to relocate across the state but not being able to enroll in a workshop.
- A suggestion was made to include families in the decision making.
- A suggestion was made for the state should hire individuals with developmental disabilities and require its contractors to do the same, similar to the federal government initiative.
- A suggestion was made for the state to maintain limited workshop capacity for individuals who are older, medically frail or have behavioral challenges.

Region 3- Hudson Valley, Taconic and Capital District

- Self advocates shared their successful transition from a workshop to employment but stressed that it is important for others to have the workshop option.
- It was suggested that the decision to close workshops be reconsidered and that state and federal entities renegotiate that section of the Transformation Agreement.
- Work centers were described as vocational training centers that not only prepare people for competitive employment but provide a safety net if people are not successful.

- Concerns were raised about the lack of a safety net in the plan and it was suggested that workshops could be transformed to serve that purpose.
- Concerns were raised that people will either attend day habilitation or stay home if workshops are closed.
- It was suggested that more focus be put on “choice” and that the plan should focus on the creation of new services that provide more choices for people.
- Families questioned why the choice of being employed in a workshop is being eliminated.
- There were questions about whether the Olmstead Decision really requires the elimination of workshops if it is the most integrated setting appropriate to a person’s needs.
- Concerns were raised about people with forensic backgrounds and the prevocational training role that workshops currently provide. There was a question about how people with forensic histories will be supported to obtain jobs in the community.
- Concerns were raised about limited volunteer opportunities in communities.
- Concerns were raised about the impact of workshop closure on NYSID contracts.
- Concerns were raised about individuals that transition from the developmental centers to voluntary agencies and whether their transition planning includes employment options.
- Concerns were raised about whether template funding adequately meets the needs of individuals transitioning from developmental centers to voluntary agencies.
- Questions were raised as to whether enclaves and mobile work crew are allowable employment options.
- Concerns were raised about how individuals who need high levels of supervision will be able to work in the community.
- Questions were raised about how technology will be used to assist individuals obtaining competitive employment.
- Concerns were raised about the impact employment will have on residential services related to staffing and scheduling.

Region 4- New York City

- Concerns were raised about the safety of individuals who will be working in the community.
- Questions were raised about how voluntary agencies can create businesses in the community that provide integrated employment opportunities to individuals transitioning from workshops.
- Concerns were raised about access to reliable transportation.

- Concerns were raised about social isolation as individuals transition from workshops to competitive employment.
- Concerns were raised about the lack of available choices if workshops are no longer an option.
- Concerns were raised about people with medical and behavioral needs. There was doubt that businesses would be willing to hire people with complex needs.
- Concerns were raised about people on the autism spectrum that would have a difficult time working in an environment with lots of people, sounds and other distractions.
- Questions were asked as to whether people who are unable to work will be able to attend day habilitation.
- Concerns were raised about the availability of the staffing supports that will be needed to successfully transition people from workshops to competitive employment. It was suggested that clinical supports be available to assist people with the emotional and psychological stresses associated with competitive employment.
- It was suggested that families be very engaged in the Employment Transformation Plan and that they be involved in the person-centered transition process for their loved ones.
- Questions were raised about retirement options for individuals in workshops.
- Questions were raised about training requirements for supported employment staff.
- Questions were raised about how self employment will be utilized as an option for individuals transitioning from workshops.
- Questions were raised about service options at the end of the Pathway to Employment service.
- Concerns were raised about current rates for prevocational services.
- Questions were raised about the new tax credit for businesses that hire individuals with developmental disabilities and whether not-for-profit businesses were eligible.

Region 5- Long Island

- Questions were raised as to whether workshops can be transformed into integrated employment settings.
- Concerns were raised about the decision to eliminate workshop funding and whether participants of workshops were consulted before the decision was made.
- Concerns were raised about whether all workshop participants will be able to successfully transition to competitive employment.
- Concerns were raised about the role of MSCs in the transition process from workshops to competitive employment. The need to have a clear role for the MSC was stressed.

- It was suggested that there be multiple paths to employment.
- Self direction was suggested as a model that could be very successful in transitioning people to employment.
- Concerns were raised about eliminating the choice of workshops.
- Concerns were raised as to whether community habilitation and self direction will offer enough alternative options to workshops.
- Concerns were raised about the impact of no new workshop enrollment and the elimination of funding on NYSID contracts.
- Concerns were raised about rates for prevocational services which are now required to be delivered in the community.
- Questions were raised about how self-employment will be an option for individuals transitioning from workshops.