

Employment First Council
Working Meeting Minutes
June 4, 2019
200 Piedmont Ave.
Atlanta, GA 30334

Members Present:

Chairman John Wells
Shawn Ryan
Conrado Marion-Landais
Eric Jacobson
Parker Glick
David Ward
Brandt White
Cherie Olivis
Paula Poulicek
Wanda Gross
Todd Youngblood
Byron Sartin

GVRA Executive Director Shawn Ryan called the meeting to order at 1:07 p.m. He welcomed everyone to the meeting. Mr. Ryan said that GVRA is committed to maximizing its partnerships with service providers, and efforts are being made to rebuild those relationships and ensure that everyone is working on behalf of the clients.

Chairman Wells said that communication and coordination between all the groups represented will be crucial to ensure that Employment First succeeds in Georgia.

Mr. Huening reviewed the first Employment Council report and discussed potential workflow solutions moving forward. One of the tasks of the council, he said, was to create a training module for providers that mirrors the philosophies that are driving Employment First.

Denine Woodson, with GVRA Sensory Services, has been tasked with reviewing the existing provider manual and to ensure it is clear in terms of expectations, requirements and the schedule of service delivery, an effort that is ultimately aimed at bridging the gap between GVRA and its providers. The four larger issues that need addressing, she said, are 1) communication, 2) evaluative metrics, 3) competency training and 4) billing. Ms. Woodson said that while there is no necessary end date to this process, it is urgent and being addressed as quickly as possible. Fixing the relationship with providers, Mr. Ryan said, is the first step in helping improve the client experience.

Mr. Jacobson discussed efforts made in the state of Washington which specifically focused on increasing the number of individuals in competitive integrated employment services. Mr. Sartin said that there should be an emphasis on reaching people in sheltered workshops, and Mr. Jacobson agreed.

The council discussed specifically what their goal as a council should be, with suggestions being made that it should reflect the opinions of clients in addition to the major stakeholders. Mr. Ward suggested that the primary goals of the council should be greater access to services and a greater understanding among the public about what kind of services are both provided and funded, all of which should work towards moving individuals into integrated employment. Mr. Wells said that it will be crucial to inform providers about the move towards employment as the primary option and let them know what resources are available to them to meet that mandate.

To get toward the goal of competitive integrated employment, Mr. Jacobson suggested a unified collection of data between GVRA, DBHDD, DOE and other relevant organizations. In addition, he said, there will need to be a training component among organizations and a communications component to ensure everyone is on the same page.

Mr. Huening suggested the Council be broken down into different smaller subcommittees: data collection, training and communications. It was decided that a survey will be sent out to help determine subcommittee groupings.

Dr. Marion-Landais said it's going to be key to engage with the employer community and break down barriers about hesitations in that community to hire individuals with disabilities.

Mr. Ryan thanked everyone for attending. He adjourned the meeting at 3:02 p.m.