

Partnerships in Employment (PIE) Systems Change Project

Developed by the Lewin Group, June 2020

Massachusetts Partnership for Transition to Employment (MPTE)



The Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services (DDS) was awarded the Partnerships in Employment (PIE) grant in September 2016 to lead MPTE and promote competitive, integrated employment (CIE) for youth and young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD).

Project Goals and Vision

Goal #1: Build and enhance cross-systems collaboration

Promoted communication across state agencies

MPTE has increased communication among state agencies through the MPTE consortium. The consortium structure includes a Steering Committee, which is comprised of several Massachusetts state agencies and PIE subcontractors. There are also four workgroups. The collaboration among state agencies has created greater awareness of the transition and employment needs of individuals with I/DD. Cross-agency efforts include various focus areas, including how individuals can be fully integrated within and benefit from career development and employment-related services/initiatives within the state.

Highlighted Activities

- Created a common employment definitions document for state agencies (2018)
- Compiled information on national best practices related to PIE focus areas, including cross-agency collaboration (2017)

Goal #2: Undertake a comprehensive effort to ensure systematic development of self-determination and self-advocacy skills for youth with I/DD

Highlighted Activities

- Updated a guidebook to assist self-advocates in their employment search (2018, 2019)
- Conducted a self-advocate survey to identify future focus areas (2018, 2019)

Promoted self-advocacy among youth and young adults with I/DD

From 2016 through 2019, Massachusetts Advocates Standing Strong (MASS), an MPTE consortium agency, conducted outreach and offered the “Explore-Prepare-Act” training for transition-age high school students. MASS also presented self-advocacy trainings across the state. Both MASS and the Developmental Disabilities Council offered a Self-Advocacy Leadership training series. Self-advocates also participate in consortium meetings, for example, by presenting on the findings of the self-advocate survey.

Goal #3: Undertake a comprehensive effort to promote consistent parental support for CIE

Increased employment awareness among families

In 2017, MPTE conducted a survey of families to understand their views on employment. After analyzing the survey results and determining that there were common misconceptions related to the employability of people with I/DD, MPTE created two [“Get the Facts” fact sheets](#) for families. The fact sheets focus on key tips for achieving CIE and helping young adults with I/DD who need decision-making supports.

Highlighted Activities

- Launched a Facebook group for family engagement, which has over 1,300 members as of 2020 (2017, 2018, 2019, 2020)

Goal #4: Disseminate tools, resources, policy guidance, and other materials to support transitions to employment and support sustainable change

Increased access to employment data and resources

In 2017, MPTE created a promising practices database. In 2018, MPTE began using an online project management and collaborative platform, *Basecamp*, to share materials and resources and promote increased communication with state agencies. In 2020, MPTE developed and published a [data dashboard](#) to share user-friendly data on the progress of employment of youth with I/DD in the state.

Partnerships in Employment (PIE) Systems Change Project

Developed by the Lewin Group, June 2020

Goal #5: Increase access to work experience and paid employment for youth and young adults in integrated settings

Increased provider capacity

MPTE increased provider capacity through the Charting the LifeCourse framework. In 2018, MPTE hosted a Charting the LifeCourse training with the University of Missouri-Kansas City for 200 people. MPTE also launched the Charting the LifeCourse Ambassador series online in 2019 for 15 participants. In collaboration with DDS, MPTE facilitated the Customized Employment Community of Practice, which is comprised of 22 providers and includes annual meetings. In addition, MPTE partners offer an extensive six-day provider training at least twice per year.

Sustainability

MPTE pursues sustainability by increasing buy-in from state agencies for employment for youth and young adults with I/DD and increases provider capacity through the Charting the LifeCourse framework. In addition, MPTE updated its work plan in 2018 to reflect an emphasis on long-term sustainability, which included details on activities for the final years of the PIE project. The efforts detailed in the work plan include raising identified issues to the state commissioner/secretariat level, supporting and expanding inter-agency teams at the local and regional level, and developing policy and policy guidance documents. The team is also continuing development of a Workplace Skills Certificate for students, which serves as an alternative option for those who are unable to earn a high school diploma. In addition, the MPTE webpage includes a [database](#) of inter-agency transition teams to promote awareness of existing teams and any geographic gaps across the state.

MPTE Partners

- Department of Developmental Services (Lead Agency)
- Developmental Disabilities Council
- Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
- Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission
- Department of Labor and Workforce Developmental
- Institute for Community Inclusion/University of Massachusetts Boston
- The Arc of Massachusetts
- Massachusetts Advocates Standing Strong

What is the Partnerships in Employment Project?

5-year grant awarded to 14 states: The Administration on Disabilities (AoD) awarded funding to eight states in 2011 and 2012, and six states in 2016: *District of Columbia, Hawaii, Kentucky, Massachusetts, South Carolina, and Utah.*

Focus on competitive integrated employment for youth with I/DD: This project promotes cross-systems and cross-agency collaboration to improve competitive integrated employment outcomes for youth and young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). *Competitive integrated employment (CIE)* is when “individuals with disabilities earn wages consistent with wages paid workers without disabilities in the community performing the same or similar work.”

States form consortiums: The six 2016 Partnerships in Employment states formed a consortium or coalition of stakeholders that include:

- ▶ **Individual Level:** Individuals with I/DD, family members
- ▶ **Community Level:** Pilot sites, employers, providers
- ▶ **State Level:** Developmental Disabilities Agency, Vocational Rehabilitation Agency, State Education Agency, State Developmental Disabilities Council, other state agencies

AoD contractors perform project evaluation and provide technical assistance: The Lewin Group is conducting a comprehensive, longitudinal evaluation and the Youth Employment Solutions (YES)! Center is providing training and technical assistance to states.