

**Report on the Working Age Adult Policy  
Case Resource Management Focus Groups**

Prepared for the King County  
Developmental Disabilities Division

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## **Introduction**

This is a report to the King County Developmental Disabilities Division on information gathered from 14 participants at two case resource management focus group sessions. The purpose of the focus groups was to gather information on questions and concerns related to the Working Age Adult Policy.

The focus group sessions were led by a facilitator and a scribe to record participant responses to six questions.

- 1. The Working Age Adult Policy raises the following questions and concerns for me...*
- 2. I need more information or clarification on the following...*
- 3. What I like about the policy is...*
- 4. I have heard that the policy will...*
- 5. I would be less concerned and more comfortable if the policy...*
- 6. Other things I would like the county to know about the policy...*

The participants generated information on what case resource managers are concerned about related to the policy; information or clarification they need on elements of the policy; what they like about the policy; what would make them less concerned and more comfortable with the policy and other things they would like the county to know regarding the policy.

## **Summary**

The case resource management focus group participants generally supported the Working Age Adult Policy and believe that it will increase work opportunities for many people. They are concerned that the policy lacks flexibility and does not address the needs of individuals that will have a difficult time being placed in employment. They are concerned that there are insufficient resources both financial as well as programmatic to implement the policy and that many providers will require extensive training to gain the skills that will be necessary. Case resource managers would like more information on how to implement the policy and clarification on what to do for people that are not on the waiver.

## **General Themes**

There are several themes that were shared by most of the participants.

The majority of case resource managers believe the policy promotes a positive image of people with disabilities and their ability to work.

The majority of the case resource managers do not believe the policy addresses the needs of people with severe disabilities. They believe there

needs to be more flexibility, choices and more creative options for those people that will have extensive support needs.

Case resource managers are concerned that there is insufficient funding to implement the policy and are particularly concerned about people without waiver services.

Case resource managers are concerned that agency staff are not adequately trained nor will they have the capacity to serve all the people that are expected to be employed. They believe the timeframe for implementation is unreasonable.

Case Resource managers would like more information and clarification on the policy. They are concerned the policy is more like a mission statement and needs more specific instructions on how to implement the policy.

### **Items of Interest**

Some case resource managers wonder why focus groups weren't done earlier.

Some case resource managers are concerned that families don't have the information they need regarding the policy and expect the case managers to answer all their questions, including how long can a person be on the pathway to employment and what services will be lost if a person is unable to get a job.

Some of the case resource managers would like to see the County hold agencies accountable for getting people jobs and for the dollars they receive. They see agencies getting the money while the people are sitting at home.

Some case resource managers see the policy as setting people up for failure. They believe that without the financial resources, training for providers, and development of new services that people with severe disabilities will not get jobs.

Some case resource managers believe there needs to be a massive community education campaign in order for this to be successful, including the identification of incentives for businesses to hire people.

Some case resource managers wonder if this is being done to save money regardless of what the person might want to do.

Some case resource managers would like to see the County develop a tracking system that would identify people that have been denied services by vendors and also identify how the waiting list works. How is the decision made on who gets referred for a job?

## Case Resource Management Focus Group Session Notes

The following are the notes from the two case resource management focus group sessions.

### Session #1

DDD Cherry Street Office  
March 22, 2006

#### Session Description

There were six participants in this focus group, including case resource managers that are on the residential team, general case managers and mental health resource manager.

#### Participant Responses:

1. *The Working Age Adult Policy raises the following questions and concerns for me...*

#### Participant #6

- I have a general concern with policies here at DDD. There is a level of cynicism that people have with policies. It seems like just another policy. Who made this policy and are our client's being served by this policy.
- My second concern is we need to understand the history of the policy. What problem is the policy trying to solve and what are the goals? Families are really cynical right now. I have a specific concern, why should having a developmental disability affect the choices for people?

#### Participant #5

- How does this help my clients? What direct difference does this make? How does this make a difference for me and for my clients?

#### Participant #4

- I was on the task force and we were told this policy is what it is and our job is to implement the policy. The overall idea is a good one, I understand why this is a good idea, the criticism is with the implementation and if it is general policy for everyone, why can only the clients on the waiver access it. It is suppose to be for everyone, but only one part of the population get to access it.

- My other concern is the task force believed that all people could participate in substantial gainful employment and I have people with severe disabilities on my caseload and I am concerned what will happen, volunteering is not okay and wages are the most important thing, I think this is unrealistic.

#### Participant #3

- I am concerned with the age cut off, we are putting demands on people and there should be more flexibility including taking the disability into consideration.
- I have a number of people in community access and families and others see this as loss of services and community access programs feel like they have been doing something wrong.
- There is some manipulation of the training goals, people are forced to describe things so they fit and follow the policy.
- I have some people that are non-verbal and I feel like they have less client choice. I'm not sure how client choice has been addressed.
- Another concern is safety. Families and residential staff have concerns about taking people with severe disabilities into the community.
- I think there is a lack of continuity when people are moved from site to site and it is also important people get the support they need.

#### Participant #2

- I have concerns about the policy. It is myopic. This is just another way for people to fail and over time if people fail enough they become less invested in work. The policy doesn't address how to deal with failure. I work with thirty eight people that are part of the lawsuit and in spite of identifying the supports that would be needed to help people be successful these needs were not considered in the contracting and only eight people have gotten jobs. People will not get jobs without appropriate supports.

#### Participant #1

- We have people with profound delays and we don't see vendors willing to spend time with people with the most profound delays. The policy is an un-funded mandate. Case managers ultimately have to decide what vendor will be used and there are not the resources available to support people even if they are on the waiver. People with severe disabilities who have never had a successful work experience are the people being left behind.

2. *I need more information or clarification on the following...*

Participant #1

- I would like to know how the State expects to implement this policy. I have not seen much clarification on funding to support people to work, especially people without resources. I don't understand how it will work.

Participant #2

- I would like to know what the expectation is for the agencies. They are collecting money for the people but the people aren't working?

Participant #3

- There were some very good definitions for vocational services within the task force. People need to be educated on the terminology and services. There needs to be more clarification on how the referral process works, who does what? Residential programs are trying to make the referrals and it is not clear who is suppose to do what, this needs to be in writing.

Participant #4

- I would like to know how the state and county expects the vendors that were formerly community access to switch to being job developers. Having done job development I know that there is a lot to learn, like marketing to employers, etc. what is in place to support the vendors? Community access hired people to do community access and all of sudden you are in way different role with a different job description without training? You can't expect people to just switch gears like that it effects staff turnover.

Participant #5

- I have many concerns. There are no written instructions on how to do this. The families are concerned about what this will mean.

Participant #6

- There needs to be more written information on vocational programs and the process. I am the first person of contact and I don't have time to do vocational. I'm not trained in vocational services. I don't know the programs or the process for getting people into programs. I need a short format that will help me understand and help the families to understand.

3. *What I like about the policy is...*

Participant #1

- I like the idea. I think vocational is a big part of everyone's life.

Participant #2

- This brings positive attention to the skills of people.

Participant #3

- The policy gives some definition to work and actual employment as an outcome rather than eternal training. I think trying to implement the policy has increased communication with employment vendors in getting some individual employment goals for people. With the policy plus the waiver there are more opportunities and optimism. People are advocating for employment for people.

Participant #4

- I like the theory behind it. You have a disability, so what? You are still capable of working, you are of value. It is not okay to sit in your easy chair for 10 hours a day and stare at the wall. We are placing a value on people and telling them you are important and expected within your ability to do something meaningful. Maybe people will see people with other disabilities working and not just people with Down Syndrome.

Participant #5

- It is the norm to be working. I am just hoping that it will bring with it funding. I had a parent see someone working and thought it was a really good thing. It is a good education for community and families.

Participant #6

- I think people face massive discrimination – People will be educated on people's abilities when they see people working.

4. *I have heard the policy will...*

Participant #6

- I have heard that the cost of MPC is going to go down if people go to work so there is great government interest in people going to work. I have a question on how the economics will work out. Will people have a living wage? It is hard to know how this will all work out. It would be nice to have some idea on what will happen. If all people got jobs would they have a better standard of living? Supervisor said our people take up a big portion of the MPC budget and if people worked they would use less service.

Participant #5

- Will people lose community integration? What will people lose because of the policy?

Participant #4

- I was on the task force and heard a lot of things. A vendor at a meeting said now volunteering is not good enough and people have to have a plan for paid employment. Most businesses are not going to go out of their way unless there is an incentive. Self employment can be successful, but there are also situations where the staff do the work. If people are not on the waiver and need to have a Pass or IRWE who will do that?

Participant #3

- The policy will be implemented no matter what. People would be moved into employment options even if it was not a good situation. Residential programs are concerned about people's safety and maybe implementation will jeopardize someone's safety. The issue of people with disabilities aging differently raises questions. Each person needs to be evaluated individually, look at physical disabilities and the jobs need to match the persons needs.

Participant #2

- There needs to be different models, what are the incentives for a new provider and what are the incentives for creative work? For some people you need a whole lot more than what is being offered. Some people need self employment like artists or other creative examples.

Participant #1

- There will be no exceptions to being in "productive" work. I have several people that are medically fragile and are not likely to get an exception

because they are relatively young. Even workshop employment will not be counted. I have a lot of guardians that say they don't want people in community jobs.

- I had a person that needed a lot of training and failed but is now in group supported and doing well, will there be enough funding and marketing to get every person a job?
- Some people raise the questions, why would an employer hire a person with a disability rather than a person without a disability? What is the incentive to hire? If there are so many benefits why are so many people not working?

5. *I would be less concerned and more comfortable if the policy...*

Participant #1

- I would be less concerned if the policy addressed the people who are not on the waiver, or people that do not want to work or people with severe disabilities. What about accommodations for individual needs?

Participant #2

- I am struck by how similar this is to the old continuum of care. There are great people trying to make this work but it still has the smell of devaluing the people with the most severe disabilities.

Participant #3

- People have multiple conditions, and they need to consider what those individuals can do and how to accommodate choice.
- There needs to be education of consumers, we are the brokers for everything, can people and their families identify what they want rather than us?

Participant #4

- I wish the policy had not been implemented before we did all of this. I'm sure there was a lot of thought that went into it, the idea is good, but we get a policy and are told to do it and it is coming back to the case managers to figure it out. It puts value on people but it imposes our values. You need to work or you won't have any other options. I think it is a positive value, "I'm able to work regardless of my disability" but it devalues people that don't make it when maybe it is their support team that sucks.

- I would feel better since we can't go back in time, if we were a little more flexible. Perhaps we could have a policy amendment as a result of the focus groups and other information that identifies issues that need to be given consideration.

Participant #5

- I'm concerned it is not representing the people. Supervisor said everyone needs to be employed, but if it is not done well it devalues people.

Participant #1

- With no resources, it is an unfunded mandate, where's the money.

Participant #6

- I'd be less concerned if there was more detail that dealt with the implementation.

6. *Other issues I would like the County to think about...*

Participant #1

- Where are you going to get the resources to pay for it?

Participant #6

- I would like the County to know I had a situation with a massive conflict of interest. What if the vendor doesn't do a good job for people? We don't want to blame, but no one is held accountable but the person. There will be huge liability issues for the State and the County as vulnerable people go into the community without protection.

Participant #4

- I have concerns about the current structure including the middle man and the rates. Why are we paying people to do nothing? We don't look at vocational services like a business, we see five pages of evaluations that involved two meetings costs \$1,200 and we end up with nothing. It is still happening and when you have limited resources why are we using our money in this way. Some person centered planning can be helpful, but the person sits in the workshop for another five years. We need to see some kind of progress. We can check the CHRIS billing. I talked with someone who has not seen their job developer in five months but the agency gets paid anyway,

Participant #5

- The County pays for the services but who get reports and who is held accountable?

Participant #1

- The County is counting outcomes and it is an incentive to cherry pick people. County needs to look at outcomes. I like incentive based and we need to give vendors adequately resources to do the job we are asking them to do.

Participant #4

- DVR pays by markers, at least vendors have to perform work to get paid.
- Maybe there needs to be a pilot to develop new agencies that focus on people with severe disabilities, people with mental health issues, etc. If the client does not have a good support team it is often not going to work and it is a negative for the person when it is poor services from the provider or residential program.
- The policy has helped the relationships but in other ways has created tension, who is responsible for what?

**Session 2**

DDD Cherry Street Office

March 22, 2006

Session Description

There were eight participants in this focus group, including case resource managers that are part of the residential team, general case management, and case resource managers with both waiver and non waiver caseloads.

Participant Responses

1. *The Working Age Adult Policy raises the following questions and concerns for me...*

Participant #1

- My concern is that the system is unable to support the policy. Will agencies be able to support people with significant disabilities that need one on one support?

#### Participant #2

- I have a couple of concerns. This is a really big change of expectations. There has been some choice in the past and the time frame under which people are expected to make this switch is too short. I got a call today from a client that feels he is being pressured by his job coach to go to work and he wanted a volunteer job.
- My second concern is for people that have a lot of medical issues. I am working with a family around the idea of work, but he has congenital heart issues plus other health issues. He has adult day health, is employment really going to meet his need and does he have a choice in the matter.

#### Participant #3

- I have two concerns. Do vocational vendors have the capacity to serve all the people that will need work and what will happen to medically fragile clients who in the past benefited from community access? For those we know will be dealing with end of life issues I would rather they have a choice of community rather than looking for a job.

#### Participant #4

- I have people already that are not getting enough support, people with health issues including seizures, etc. The transition from workshop to employment has not been good; agencies have not been that realistic about what people can do. It happened too fast, the workshop has been a social thing and the fast transition just bombed. It needs to be done in a way that meets client's needs and interest.

#### Participant #5

- When policy was developed who was involved in the development of it? I was at a meeting at Ballard High school and the teacher was shocked at the lack of choice. With the limited funds how will people that are not on the waiver be supported?

#### Participant #6

- I have some people that are going to be difficult to support. There is not enough creativity. Not everyone wants to work in janitorial or with food. I am having a hard time convincing families, they are pretty resistive. I have had them just call and say give me a sheltered workshop, especially people with challenging behaviors and anxiety.

Participant #7

- The creative question is a good one. I just started my caseload and have about a dozen people on a waiting list, not going anywhere. I am confused with the number of steps it takes. I am told, go talk to DVR, the State gives money to the County for the service but we have to authorize. Who do we talk to about things? This is an administrative nightmare. I don't even know what to believe even when I read the policy. It is so hard to hire people and keep staff to serve our clients.

Participant #8

- Statewide I have tremendous concern for rural communities. The other capacity issue I have is that our day program dollars are about individuals not families. When we start looking at community employment, how do we continue to support the family when the person works 10 to 15 hours a week and family members also work who cares for the person when they are not working? DVR may not see our folks as being able to work.
- The ETP policy is not really a policy. It depends upon who you know and how you write the exception. We need to have clear definitions of what the exception policy is and for whom.

2. *I need more information or clarification on the following...*

Participant #8

- What is the exception to the rule? How do we interact with DVR, when vendors are at capacity what do we do?

Participant #7

- I have read the policy and I have talked to vendors, and other case managers, I don't get it. It is so muddled.

Participant #6

- I have recently dealt with vendors that don't understand it and how the exceptions work. Who is responsibility to write the exceptions to a plan? I truly don't think it is case manager's responsibility to write the exception. The vendors have gone so far as to write the letter for me and expect me to sign. I think the vendors should write exceptions within the policy.

Participant #5

- How long can someone be on a pathway to employment? That is where a lot of my folks will stay for a long time.

- When I read the policy it didn't seem like a real policy it is kind of pie in the sky. I want to receive training to make it more concrete.

#### Participant #4

- I agree. Where are the doors that I need to go knocking on? How do I find out more about DVR? How do I find out which vendors have openings. The meetings here with vendors have been great.

#### Participant #3

- I would agree with everything that has been said. It is the Pie in the Sky. At what length and how much money do we pour into someone to help them get their own business, I don't think the client cares one way or another, it is the vendor. What is the intent of the policy in a realistic way? They need to think about the resources that would be necessary to meet this goal for everyone. Does volunteer work count?

#### Participant #2

- I would like to know what services are available. It seems like only employment unless there is an exception to policy. I think there are only a handful of vendors out there that are skilled with working with people who are not typically employable. Vendors may be structuring plans so nothing happens.
- We need help to understand the policy and so do vendors. From my experience in finding employment, if everyone is not on board it is impossible to make something like this happen. There will be a vendor learning curve and clients will be the ones to suffer.

#### Participant #1

- When I first read the policy it seemed like a mission statement. The policy needs meat and parameters around it.

#### Participant #4

- A Community Access vendor asked me what goals she should be working on. There is confusion.

#### Participant #8

- Everything is going to be called a long pathway.

3. *What I like about the policy is...*

Participant #8

- Until we hold our feet to the fire we won't do it. There will be a lot of resistance, until there is a motivation there will not be as many people working. When people work they have friends, buying power, etc.

Participant #7

- This provides a positive image and helps people find creative ways to be employed. It is a very positive statement, but that is all it is. It should not be a policy without how to and resources to implement it.

Participant #6

- The policy gets people out of the house. I make friends at work and I think it broadens their support base and opportunities for vendors to educate the community on what people can do.

Participant #5

- I think it will slowly start to change the way parents think so they have expectation that their kids will work. The goal will be different in the future.

Participant #4

- There is potential down the road. It gives the opportunity for people to work at Costco, Boeing, etc. instead of sheltered workshop.

Participant #3

- I would like to see client's grow up believing that people expect them to work. This is a good thing that everyone expects that people will have a job when they grow up.

Participant #2

- It promotes inclusion. We all grew up and were expected to work and I think it is really good in that way for those families that expect that their sons and daughters will work. I think it going to be really good for inclusiveness in the community and a snowball effect where people expect to see people with disabilities as a part of their normal routine in life.

Participant #1

- It heightens the awareness of society that people can work and be included in the community.

4. *I have heard the policy will...*

Participant #8

- I haven't heard much. Families know nothing about it. In terms of our field I have heard it takes choice away and people will be mandated to work.

Participant #7

- I was doing a plan of Care and my client said I don't want to hear about work. People in the office said when will this fail? There are so many weird things that may not work, when something doesn't work what kind of repercussion will there be? We hope it will work.
- There are rumors about those that will have that every long pathway to employment, will they lose services, what will happen to people?

Participant #6

- People are afraid they will lose services, like adult day health.

Participant #4

- People have lost things in the past so there are legitimate concerns.

Participant #5

- People think the workshops are gone. Some people might get value out of them.

Participant #4

- People that were in community access are now on pathway to employment are concerned what will happen if they don't have achievable goals.

Participant #3

- I wonder what vendors are being told.

Participant #2

- What will happen if people don't meet the goals? Parents are concerned that they know their child the best and safety is a big thing. I haven't heard too much so far.

Participant #1

- I haven't really heard too much.

5. *I would be less concerned and more comfortable if the policy...*

Participant #8

- I would be less concerned if the policy addressed the exceptions and had procedures on how to implement the policy.
- I would be more comfortable if I saw a plan for a huge amount of public education and resources. How do we get people on board if we don't explain it to them?

Participant #7

- I would be less concerned if the policy was explained better. Definitely education for the community would be awesome. I am doing the best I can and I will see how it goes and hope it gets better refined.

Participant #6

- I would be less concerned if there were more education for community and vendors. I would feel better if there was a more realistic time frame.

Participant #5

- I would be more comfortable if it were revised to be more inclusive for all our clients and more creative choices.

Participant #4

- People are involved with friends and people in the sheltered workshop and group supported, how will you duplicate that in a job? How will that transition happen so they maintain those things?

Participant #3

- I would be more comfortable if there were community education. The community has to buy into the concept of clients working and I would be

more comfortable if the policy were written so it is clear what the expectations are. People do not have a choice.

Participant #6

- Where is power and choice when we say people have to work?

Participant #2

- I would feel more comfortable if there was a history of supports being available for people that have already been employed. History doesn't bode well for people. I would be more comfortable if the expectation for work had a choice in it. I am lucky when a vendor calls me back, why should people get penalized if things don't work out.
- If the policy took into account the amount of time that people need to prepare and how long do people have to pay the price for a bad service. People are guinea pigs while we are trying to figure this out.

Participant #1

- I would have less concern if at the time they developed the policy they were putting together a financial plan for funding it. I have had several clients that have been through DVR and vendors are not picking them up so they are dropped. How will we pay for it?

Participant #4

- PASS and IRWE plans have worked for some people but it takes forever.

Participant #6

- Families say that they are hearing that they will have to pay or contribute to the funding or develop the jobs for people.

Participant #4

- I have had families that have gotten jobs for their kids.

6. *Other things I would like the County to think about...*

Participant #2

- There is a lack of education with vendors. Maybe the buck is being passed and vendors don't know what to say. It is being set up for failure in big and little ways.

Participant #8

- We have implemented so many policies over the years that if we don't bring families on board they will be very resistive and we have not done so well. We have to get the money.

Participant #5

- Transition students need one on one, DVR said they are not employable, vendor said they would serve but only two hours a week.

Participant #1

- I would like to see a tracking system between the County and us on who is being served and who is being denied. How do agencies know who to pick up next? Thurston County has a list and the name at the top of the list gets the chance.

Participant #2

- To be on the waiver people have to receive a service if they don't receive a service they can lose waiver services. If a vendor turns people down they could lose waiver status.