



# **Metro Regional Quality Council Employment Report**

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*"To improve the quality of services and supports for people with disabilities"*

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## **In this Report:**

This report will outline the current status of employment for people with disabilities and will cover employment data, best practices, and challenges/barriers collected by the Metro Regional Quality Council (MRQC). The MRQC collected this information through three methods: Person-Centered Quality Reviews, employment focus groups, and employer informational interviews. The report will end with a discussion of the findings, state and local recommendations to improve employment experiences for people with disabilities, and next steps for the Metro Regional Quality Council (MRQC).

## **Current Employment Status for Minnesotans with Disabilities**

Minnesota is an Employment First state that is committed to insuring competitive, integrated employment for all people with disabilities, with employment prioritized ahead of other supports and services. To help people with disabilities explore, find, and keep a job in the community, Minnesota added three new employment services to Home and Community-Based Service waivers in 2018. The new services include; exploration, development and support services to help people with disabilities make informed decisions about working in the community.<sup>7</sup>

As of 2018, more than 600,000 Minnesota residents reported having at least one disability, encompassing 11 percent of the state's population<sup>1</sup>. When considering the three counties the Metro Regional Quality Council serves, Hennepin County has 110,150 people who report having a disability followed by Dakota County reporting 33,380 and Scott County reporting 8,990.<sup>6</sup> Among the child population ages 5-17, as well as the typical working-age population ages 18-64, a cognitive disability is most common. However, the older adult population, ages 65 and older, is more likely to report an ambulatory disability above all others, followed by hearing and independent living disabilities. Cognitive disabilities fall to the fourth most common disability among Minnesota's older adults in the American Community Survey (ACS).<sup>6</sup>

When examining Minnesota's overall workforce, residents with disabilities have lower levels of labor market participation, lower employment-to-population ratios, and substantially higher unemployment rates. According to the American Community Survey (ACS), in 2018, the annual unemployment rate for Minnesotans living with a disability was 9 percent, more than double that of the general population, which was 3.4 percent<sup>6</sup>. This leads to higher poverty levels for people with disabilities than those without disabilities. The ability to find employment and have economic stability is an important quality of life indicator for Minnesotans with disabilities. The

critical takeaway is that people living with disabilities continue to face significant obstacles to competitive, integrated employment<sup>6</sup>.

In September 2019, the Department of Human Services (DHS) - Disability Services Division (DSD), the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) - Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS), and State Services for the Blind (SSB) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to outline their new partnership. The goal of this partnership is to improve employment outcomes for people on Home and Community-Based Waivers.<sup>4</sup> Though this MOU is only acting as a framework, it is a very important first step in streamlining, simplifying, and increasing access to employment services and supports across the state. The creation of this partnership is not enough. The preparation, implementation, and evaluation of this partnership will be important factors in providing employment services and supports that are equitable, person-centered, and customized to each person. Additionally, it is important to note that positive employment experiences are not limited to or dependent solely on services and supports; therefore, continued work is needed outside of these systems.

## **Data Collection Method 1: Person-Centered Quality Review Analysis – Employment Section**

The Metro Regional Quality Council conducted 240 Person-Centered Quality Reviews between November 2017 and January 2020. Quality Reviews are interviews with people about their quality of life. The reviews asked about choice and control in different topic areas such as housing, daily routine, community involvement, employment, relationships, support staff, safety, transportation, case management, future life planning, services and supports, and hopes, dreams and goals.

For the purpose of this report, the employment section of the Person-Centered Quality Reviews was analyzed, looking for best practices and barriers/challenges.

### **Person-Centered Quality Review Procedure**

Data scientists from the Department of Human Services (DHS) randomly selected interview participants and transferred their information into the Regional Quality Council's secure database, Agile Apps. To qualify to be in the random sample, a person must meet the following qualifications:

- County of Fiscal Responsibility (CFR) is within Hennepin, Scott, or Dakota counties;
- Are 14 years old or older;

- Receiving Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) but are not strictly on the Elderly Waiver

From Agile Apps, MRQC staff randomly selected between 50 and 100 participants each week to invite to participate in the Quality Reviews. MRQC sent participants “Selected for Interview” letters and, if necessary, a “Selected for Interview Guardian” letter to guardians. An example of the selection letter can be found in Appendix B. The initial contact attempt also contained an informational brochures that informed the participant and their supports about the MRQC and what the interview process entailed. MRQC staff or interns followed up the letter with one to two phone calls to each participant (if the phone number on Agile Apps was accurate). Each contact attempt and response was recorded in Agile Apps.

During the quality review process, there were two Quality Reviewers: one to lead the interview and one to take notes. After an introduction and overview of the process, the reviewers asked questions within the ten topic areas relating to quality of services and overall quality of life. The purpose of these interviews are to be conversational and to record the thoughts and experiences of the interviewee. As a result, the specific questions within each topic vary depending on the interviewee and the Quality Reviewer. However, for each of the ten topics there are one to two ranking questions (unless the interviewee refused). The interview tool used to support the Quality Reviewers can be found in Appendix C.

Once the interview was complete, both reviewers were responsible for revising and editing the notes for accuracy. After both reviewers reviewed and approved the notes, they were uploaded into Agile Apps. A full summary of the interview was sent to the interviewee, along with an interviewee feedback form. The feedback form aimed to gather information on how the experience was for the interviewee and if there were any areas within the process that needed improvement. The feedback allowed MRQC staff to evaluate the Quality Review procedure and lead to changes in the process as well as trainings for MRQC staff, interns, and/or volunteers. The interviewee feedback form can be provided upon request from the project manager.

### **Follow-up Protocol:**

Directly after the interview, the Quality Reviewers gave a resource list to the interviewee that contained information about the project, general resources, housing resources, crisis resources, information about the Office of the Ombudsman, and community advocacy and support resources. After the interview, Quality Reviewers highlighted any relative resources that could potentially help the interviewee based on what was shared during the interview. When explaining the resource list, the Quality Reviewers encouraged interviewee to contact the project manager with any questions or concerns that may have come up after the interview. The interviewee was also encouraged to reach out to the Project Manager if there were any

mistakes or missed information in the full summary of their interview. This final review by the interviewee allowed for a third check for accuracy (the first two checks being from each Quality Reviewer).

The interviewees were invited to use their summary to help direct changes in their services or use it as a tool to advocate for themselves with their support team or family. Multiple copies of the summary could be sent to the interviewee if they wanted to share it with others. The interview summary could also be sent to different members of the interviewee's support team, if requested.

## Person-Centered Quality Review Demographics:

Table 1: Sex	n
Female	114
Male	126
Total	240

Table 1: Sex breakdown of Quality Review participants

Table 2: County of Residence	n
Hennepin	175
Scott	9
Dakota	56
Total	240

Table 2: County breakdown of Quality Review participants

Table 3: Service Agreement Type	n
Alternative Care (AC) Waiver	6
Brain Injury (BI) Waiver	6
Community (CADI) Waiver	125
Developmental Disabilities (DD) Waiver	63
Elderly Waiver (EW)	2
Essential Community Supports	2
Home Care	36
Total	240

Table 3: Service agreement type of Quality Review participants

Table 4: Race	n
Asian	7
Black / African American	61
American Indian / Alaskan Native	1
White	161
Unspecified or Unknown	10
Total	240

Table 4: Race of Quality Review participants

Note: There were no participants on the Community Alternative Care (CAC) Waiver

## Person-Centered Quality Review Questions:

During the Person-Centered Quality Reviews, interviewers asked ranking questions and open-ended questions, which resulted in gathering two types of data: quantitative and qualitative data. After over a year of asking the original set of employment questions, the Regional Quality Councils and State Quality Council decided to change the questions because they were not gathering specific enough information and participants were having trouble understanding the questions.

The first set of employment ranking questions were used 7/2017 – 6/2019:

*“To improve the quality of services and supports for people with disabilities”*

- a. How much control do you have over having a job that you like?
- b. How much control would you like to have over having a job that you like?

The second set of employment ranking questions were used 7/2019 – 1/2020:

- a. How much choice do you have over whether or not you are working?
- b. To what extent do you feel your job meets your needs?

## Person-Centered Quality Review Quantitative Results:

Results of the employment ranking questions are below, organized by waiver type. An explanation of each waiver type can be found in Appendix A.

AC	Acute Care (waiver program)
BI	Brain Injury (waiver program)
CADI	Community Access for Disability Inclusion (waiver program)
DD	Developmental Disabilities waiver
EW	Elderly Waiver

## Results from employment ranking questions used 7/2017 – 6/2019:

Table 5: Employment A: How much control do you have over having a job that you like? (7/17 – 6/19)							
	AC	BI	CADI	DD	EW	Home Care	Total
Full	1	0	14	5	2	3	25
Most	3	0	19	8	0	1	31
Some	0	1	20	10	0	14	32
None	0	0	19	6	0	7	20
N/A	1	1	6	9	0	3	45
Total	5	2	78	38	2	28	153

Table 5: Results from Employment A ranking questions of the Quality Reviews used between 7/17 and 6/19

Table 6: Employment B: How much control would you like to have over having a job that you like? (7/17 – 6/19)							
	AC	BI	CADI	DD	EW	Home Care	Total
Full	2	1	53	10	2	18	85
Most	2	0	17	12	0	3	34
Some	0	0	2	4	0	2	8
None	0	0	3	3	0	0	6
N/A	1	1	3	9	0	5	19
Total	5	2	78	38	2	28	153

Table 6: Results from Employment B ranking questions of the Quality Reviews used between 7/17 and 6/19

Note: Over half (50.1%) of the respondents in this section were on the CADI waiver.

## General Results:

**41.1% of people want more control over having a job they like.** Only 36.6% (56/153) reported having full/most control over having a job they like while 77.7% (119/153) want full/most control.

## Results by Waiver Type:

- **47.4% of people on the CADI waiver want more control over having a job they like.** 42.3% (33/78) of people on the CADI waiver reported having full/most control while 89.7% (70/78) wanted full/most control.
- **23.7% of people on the DD waiver want more control over having a job they like.** 13/38 (34.2%) of people on the DD waiver reported having full/most control over having a job they like while 57.9% (22/38) want full/most control.
  - 9/38 (23.7%) reported that this question is not applicable (reason often cited is that they “can’t work” due to health or age)

## Results from employment ranking questions used 7/2019 – 1/2020:

Table 7: Employment A: How much control do you have over whether or not you are working? (Starting 7/1/19)							
	AC	BI	CADI	DD	Essential Community Support	Home Care	Total
Full	0	0	8	5	0	1	14
Most	0	1	11	7	1	2	22
Some	1	3	13	8	0	3	28
None	0	0	13	4	1	0	18
N/A	0	0	2	2	0	3	28
Total	1	4	47	26	2	7	87

Table 7: Results from Employment A ranking questions of the Quality Reviews used between 7/19 and 1/20

## General Results – Control Over Working:

Of those interviewed after 7/2019, **41.1% of people said they have most or full control over whether or not they are working while 53.0% said they have some or no control.**

## Results by Waiver Type:



- Of the 47 people interviewed who were on the CADI Waiver, 40.4% (19/47) reported having most or full control over whether or not they are working. 55.3% (26/47) reported having some or no control over whether or not they are working.
- Of the 26 people interviewed who were on the DD Waiver, 46.2% (12/26) reported having most or full control over whether or not they are working. 46.2% (12/26) reported having some or no control over whether or not they are working.

<b>Table 8: Employment B: To what degree does your job meet your needs? (Starting 7/1/19)</b>							
	AC	BI	CADI	DD	Essential Community Support	Home Care	Total
Full	0	1	9	10	1	1	22
Most	0	1	10	6	0	2	19
Some	0	1	5	4	0	1	1
None	0	0	1	0	0	0	34
N/A	1	1	22	6	1	3	11
Total	1	4	47	26	2	7	87

Table 8: Results from Employment B ranking questions of the Quality Reviews used between 7/19 and 1/20

## General Results – Job Meeting Needs:

Of those interviewed after 7/2019 who reported working, **47.1% reported their job mostly or fully meets their needs while 40.2% said their job somewhat or does not meet their needs at all.**

### Breakdown by waiver type:

- Of the 47 people interviewed who were on the CADI Waiver, 40.4% (19/47) reported their job mostly or fully meets their needs. 34.0% (16) reported their job somewhat or does not meet their needs. Further, 46.8% answered “Not Applicable” for this question to indicate they are not working at the time of the interview.
- Of the 26 people interviewed who were on the DD Waiver, 61.5% (16/26) reported their job mostly or fully meets their needs. 15.4% (4/26) reported their job somewhat or does not meet their needs. Further, 46.8% answered “Not Applicable” for this question to indicate they are not working at the time of the interview.

## Person-Centered Quality Review Qualitative Results:

During the Quality Reviews, interviewers asked the participants open-ended questions to get a better understanding of their experiences. These answers were recorded and have been analyzed below, looking for themes.

*Note:* these qualitative questions were not the same every time, which will be reflected in the results. Frequency of experiences are likely underreported in this section.

Of the 240 people interviewed, 134 (55.8%) reported that they were not currently working.

- Of the 134 people who were not working, 91 (67.9%) reported wanting to work immediately or in the future
- Of the 134 people who were not working, 28 (20.9%) reported not wanting to work
- Of the 134 people who were not working, 14 (10.4%) consider themselves retired and 17 (12.7%) were attending school

People with disabilities face many barriers to working.

- The largest barrier to working was related to health or disability (81 people, 60.4%)
  - 66 people reported physical disabilities or health challenges to working
  - 13 people reported mental illness or mental challenges to working
- Other barriers included
  - Confusion or fear of losing benefits from income
  - Lack of accessible transportation
  - Staffing (shortage, turnover, poor quality)
  - Discriminatory hiring process
  - Bad/unsupportive supervisors
  - Technology

Though 134 people reported not working at the time of the interview, the majority of people interviewed had worked at some point in their lives. The main complaints from people who had worked at any point were lack of hours, low wages, lack of opportunity to move up or advance, lack of accommodations, and lack of skills or experience to get the job they want.

Of the 240 people interviewed, 63 (26.3%) reported that they were currently working.

Typically, people who were working reported positive experiences.

- 52/63 (82.5%) responded that they liked their job
- 9/63 (14.3%) responded that they disliked their job
- 16/63 (25.4%) reported looking for a new job or an additional job

Work environment heavily impacts people's work experiences. People who reported positive experiences often attributed it to supervisors and coworkers who had good communication

skills, listened, and were supportive. Having a flexibility in hours or working from home also contributed to positive work experiences. Flexibility can be key when working with unpredictable health conditions.

When asked about their ideal jobs, the most frequent response related to working with or helping people and animals. People also frequently reported their ideal job was working with animals or owning their own business/being their own boss.

Of those who were working, 42 reported receiving supports in finding, applying for, or maintaining employment.

- 24/42 worked with job coaches
- 9/42 received help from case managers or social workers
- 5/42 worked with VRS
- 4/42 used the Workforce Center

People reported mixed experiences working with employment supports.

#### **Job Coaches:**

For those who worked with job coaches, people reported positive experiences when their job coaches were engaged, helped develop skills, assisted with application processes, advocated for them, and helped them find a job that met wants/needs.

People reported negative experiences with job coaches who had poor communication skills, were unresponsive, were unfocused, and were unreliable. Others noted frustration with job coach turnover or feeling that they did not need the job coach and are able to work more independently.

#### **Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Workforce Center**

The majority of the people who worked with the Workforce Center (WFC) or Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) had negative experiences. Complaints with the WFC: everything is done on the computer, needing transportation there, and needing staff support to navigate their processes. One person said they have been working with WFC for 3-4 years with no success.

Complaints with VRS were similar. Two people were frustrated with how long it was taking to find a job. One person had noted working with VRS for 2 years with no success. Other complaints were that the staff at VRS didn't know how to work with people with specific disabilities such as traumatic brain injuries.

## **Data Collection Method 2: Employment Focus Groups**

The following section contains information from employment focus groups conducted by the Metro Regional Quality Council (MRQC). Between 8/2019 and 2/2020, the MRQC engaged with 60 people through 7 focus groups: 3 focus groups with people with disabilities, 2 with family members, 1 with employment professionals, 1 with case managers. Scripts and questions for each focus group can be made available upon request.

The results of the focus groups have been combined, identifying themes across stakeholder groups.

### **Employment Focus Groups Results:**

#### **Current Situation:**

The majority of people with disabilities involved in the focus groups participated in jobs such as janitorial, assembly work, fast food, and day programs. Some participants were currently unemployed but looking for work. The majority of the focus group participants were looking for work or to transition into a new job.

Meaningful work means something different to each person. For the people with disabilities involved in these focus groups, meaningful work means:

- Getting money to pay for things (travel/vacations, home of my own, recreational activities, video games, furniture)
- Being part of a happy team
- Metro Mobility gets people to work/home on time
- Helping others, make the community a better place
- Being involved, working with people
- Having a supportive boss that one can trust
- Learning new skills
- Becoming more independent
- Getting out of the house / Having something to do all day
- Enjoying the tasks
- Having a purpose
- Making friends, getting along with coworkers
- Structure without repetition

#### **Person-Centered Planning**

- Many people with disabilities, family members, and some professional supports did not know what person-centered plans were.

- Many who participated in person-centered plans did not think they helped them find jobs because progress took too long and there was no follow up.
- Family members had different perspectives on the process. Some thought that the process was trying to force their loved one into a certain world and did not feel like their loved one was able to know what their hopes/dreams are. Many family members appreciated the intent of the process but were generally unsatisfied with the outcome.
- Support professionals had mixed experiences when working with people who had undergone person-centered planning. For those who did not feel the process was successful, the main barriers were lack of follow through, lack of reimbursement for follow through, lack of buy-in from person or family, and inaccessibility for those who do not have the necessary supports or resources. Those who had a positive experience with person-centered plans, noted it is most successful when put into practice on a day-to-day basis and using the plan as a reminder can keep people motivated and on track. Person-centered plans also help case managers provide proper support to each person.

*Note: The following results have combined feedback from people with disabilities and family members as well as feedback from support professionals (case managers and employment workers).*

## Job search:

There were mixed experiences when discussing how easy or difficult it was to find a job.

Table 9: Best Practices During the Job Search	
For People with Disabilities and Family Members	For Support Professionals
Volunteering: helps make connections, get more exposure to world, and build experience for resume.	Asking everyone “are you interested in employment?”
Strong support systems helped find job <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family member to push or advocate</li> <li>Staff</li> </ul>	Customized employment helps get to the deeper point of finding what people want
Online resources such as Google, Indeed	Tell people about job fairs that are occurring
Physically going to businesses	Give information to staff to support follow up
Networking with peers, friends, families, old colleagues	Have conversation right away about what to expect when they start a new job
Attending career and job fairs	Advocating for our clients to their families
Following up after interview	Using important to and important for tools
Job search classes helped prepare to get job such as resumes, interviews, and how to disclose disability	

Table 9 lists common best practices during the job search from people with disabilities and family members compared to support professionals

Table 10: Challenges and Barriers During the Job Search – For People with Disabilities and Family Members	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need list of places hiring people with disabilities</li> <li>Lack of good job opportunities</li> <li>Process takes too long</li> <li>No response after interviews</li> <li>Lack of experience</li> <li>Online resources have not been helpful with new ideas on how to find a job (Career Builder, Monster, Indeed)</li> <li>Intimidating to apply</li> <li>Inaccessible and long applications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inaccessible or inflexible interviews</li> <li>Can’t think of a job / hard to figure out what job you want</li> <li>Job not up front about their requirements</li> <li>I don’t qualify for another job</li> <li>Disclosing disability</li> <li>Everything changes too fast for the system to keep up</li> <li>Tried everything with no success</li> <li>Employers won’t employ people with disabilities</li> <li>Can’t work full time</li> </ul>

Table 10 lists common challenges and barriers during the job search from people with disabilities and family members

**Table 11: Challenges and Barriers During the Job Search – Professional Supports**

Workforce Center	Supports
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have to go through the Work Force Center before they can go on waived employment services</li> <li>Have to wait for Work Force Center to fail before they get employment supports</li> <li>Transportation to center is a challenge</li> <li>Work Force Center is not equipped to work with the people we support who are under a waiver</li> <li>I have never seen someone get a job from the Work Force Center</li> <li>Long process through the Work Force Center</li> <li>Pushes off inevitable of needing a job coach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supports not available</li> <li>Some haven't been able to get the skills and training to be in competitive employment</li> <li>There are waiting lists for employment supports</li> <li>Long process to get the services they need <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Long wait list for just the first step and then it is even longer to get people employment supports</li> </ul> </li> <li>Individuals who want to work but lack training</li> <li>Employers not allowing people to have supports</li> <li>Employers not understanding why job coaches are there</li> </ul>
Systemic Challenges	Working with Parents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Separation of employment models – people are not on the same page</li> <li>Complicated system - We might have to work with multiple organizations for one person</li> <li>Complicated system - explain something to someone but people can walk away understanding it in different ways</li> <li>The system forces people to have narrow options</li> <li>Traditional and mainstream culture. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We often don't think about self-employment or different country of origin and how that would impact how someone thinks about employment</li> </ul> </li> <li>More conversations around diversity and cultural differences and how that impacts employment</li> <li>People want to work from home and don't know how to find those jobs</li> <li>Criminal records prevents employment</li> </ul>	General
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unclear when a parent is also a guardian (don't know who to go to for direction)</li> <li>Parents with different ideas of what meaningful employment is</li> <li>Parents saying they want something for their child that differs from the employed individual</li> <li>People do not have stable housing. If they don't have a home they aren't able to think about employment</li> <li>A very limited view on what jobs are out there</li> <li>There is a gap between what people want to do and knowing how to get there</li> <li>People aren't willing to do the work to be successful</li> <li>Employers unwilling to employ people with disabilities</li> </ul>

Table 11 lists common challenges and barriers to the job search heard from support professionals

### Working and Keeping a Job:

For people with disabilities and family members, the most important factor in keeping a job related to the work environment, including relationships with supervisor and coworkers.

For professional supports, access to transportation, accommodations, and communication were important for the people they support.

**Table 12: Best Practices when Working and Keeping a Job**

People with Disabilities and Family Members	Professional Supports
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A supportive and fair work environment</li> <li>• Structure</li> <li>• Natural supports (co-workers)</li> <li>• Feeling confident to do the job</li> <li>• Working from home</li> <li>• Open and honest communication with supervisor</li> <li>• Good manager               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Good mood, easy to deal with</li> <li>○ Considerate, compassionate, and understanding</li> <li>○ Having knowledge or experiences</li> <li>○ Treating all employees equally</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dakota County Lyft pilot program</li> <li>• Adaptive equipment in the community</li> <li>• Frequent meetings (quarterly) with the team; case manager, guardian, if they have employment supports, residents, etc.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Having contact with the employment supports and making sure things are moving along</li> <li>○ Figuring what needs to happen to meet the needs of the person we are supporting</li> <li>○ Making sure that everyone is a team player and ready to work on the goals</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Giving opportunities to show examples competitive employment</li> <li>• Internal communication               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Monthly check in's with staff - Opportunities to share resources and collaborate with other staff</li> <li>○ Weekly update emails provides open communication and great discussion</li> </ul> </li> <li>• When unhappy with the job, asking questions to help them make an informed choice</li> </ul>

Table 12 lists common best practices when working and keeping a job from people with disabilities and family members compared to professional supports

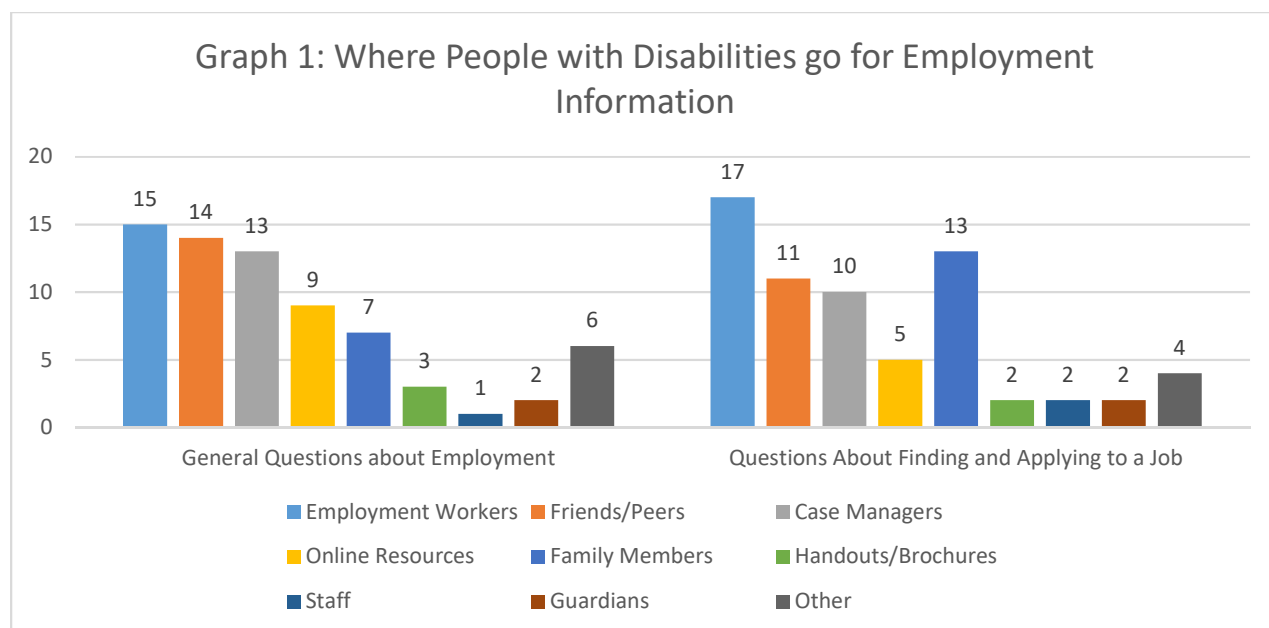
**Table 13: Challenges/Barriers when Working and Keeping a Job – People with Disabilities and Family**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employers not making accommodations</li> <li>• Working and maintaining benefits</li> <li>• MA-EPD doesn't work for all</li> <li>• Public transportation / Metro Mobility</li> <li>• Getting to job on time</li> <li>• Don't get paid enough</li> <li>• People in the community are mean</li> <li>• Job coach / staffing               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Turnover or inconsistency</li> <li>○ Poor communication</li> <li>○ Undertrained / bad at their jobs</li> <li>○ Overworked</li> <li>○ Low pay = bad applicants</li> <li>○ Language barriers</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health challenges make it hard to follow schedule               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Unexpected health challenges</li> <li>○ Physical limitations, side effects of medications</li> <li>○ Impact on behavior</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Need mentorship</li> <li>• Hard to stay on task</li> <li>• Inaccessible location – far from public transportation</li> <li>• Getting a loan is hard</li> <li>• Need a vehicle for job but can't afford it</li> <li>• Exploitive pay for work</li> <li>• Not feeling included in workplace/clashes with coworkers</li> <li>• New, bad, unsupportive management</li> <li>• Disclosing disability</li> </ul>
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Table 13 lists common challenges and barriers when working and keeping a job from people with disabilities and family members



## Resources:



Graph 1: Outline of where people with disabilities report going for employment information and support

People with disabilities largely rely on employment support workers, case managers, and friends/peers for support with employment.

Parents of people with disabilities mentioned they utilized housing staff, friends, schools, and day programs for employment resources. When asked, the majority of people and family members were not familiar with Disability Hub or DB101.

Table 14: General Resources	
Best Practices/ Success	Challenges and Barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PCA provides helps me find jobs</li> <li>• ILS worker helps find jobs</li> <li>• Disability Hub for MA-EPD information</li> <li>• Volunteering</li> <li>• Day programs help with writing resumes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of quality interpreters</li> <li>• Career Force never helped, couldn't find anyone with the proper experience</li> <li>• Very few people have heard of Disability Hub or DB101</li> <li>• DEED was not helpful</li> <li>• Workforce Center was horrible and useless</li> <li>• Workforce Center gave up on us / we were not a priority</li> <li>• People don't know what they need for employment supports</li> </ul>

Table 14 lists common best practices and challenges or barriers to general resources

**Table 15: Case Managers as a Resource**

Best Practices/ Success	Challenges and Barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hands on support - takes to tour jobs</li> <li>• Stays positive</li> <li>• Always there to help</li> <li>• Is responsive to the person's needs</li> <li>• Understands how the person thinks</li> <li>• Can make things interesting / fun</li> <li>• Open and thinks outside of the box</li> <li>• Is a resource / informed</li> <li>• Helpful during life transitions</li> <li>• Look at the whole person</li> <li>• Focus on the "can do's" not the "can't do's"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hard to get in touch, won't answer calls</li> <li>• Wasn't prepared after graduation</li> <li>• Lack of knowledge</li> <li>• Looking to deny or minimizes waivers after finding one or two fixes</li> <li>• Have not gotten employment support from case managers</li> </ul>

Table 15 lists common best practices, challenges, and barriers when working with a case manager as an employment resource

**Table 16: Job Coach as a Resource**

Best Practices/Success	Challenges and Barrier
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liked the people I worked with</li> <li>• Helped write my business plan</li> <li>• Had insight into my career goals</li> <li>• Good communication / liaison <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Notes, calls, texts, emails</li> <li>○ NOT talking for the employee</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Able to navigate employee and employer</li> <li>• Knows their role and employee's role</li> <li>• Being creative, flexible, and accommodating</li> <li>• Mediator to help employee through challenges</li> <li>• Fun</li> <li>• Teaching employee to advocate for themselves</li> <li>• Hold employee accountable</li> <li>• Shows up / is consistent</li> <li>• Knows when to help and when to step back</li> <li>• Self-directed budgets so that we can be more creative around how and who we are paying <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Recruit coworkers to be a job coach</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Have a more experienced employee with remote flexible position so that they can support other employees</li> <li>• Training employees on funding and funding sources so they can answer questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some people want to work without a job coach</li> <li>• Didn't provide help when asked</li> <li>• Didn't know how to work with deaf people</li> <li>• Had a few bad job coaches</li> <li>• Staff rely too much on job coach</li> <li>• Never showed up</li> <li>• Staffing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Being short staffed</li> <li>○ Need physical support/ 1:1 job coach – difficult to find with staffing shortage</li> <li>○ Unreliable staffing</li> <li>○ If their job coach doesn't show up and they are the transportation for the client, then the client misses work</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Table 16 lists common best practices, challenges, and barriers when working with a job coach as an employment resource

## Resources for Support Professionals

Employment support professionals utilize their colleagues and team meetings for information. They also get information from Disability Hub, DB101, Job Accommodation Network (JAN), and SCORE.

Table 17: Resources for Support Professionals - Disability Hub/ DB101	
Like	Dislike
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Live chat</li> <li>• Easy to read language</li> <li>• Accurate</li> <li>• Videos are informative and can give teams quick and basic ideas</li> <li>• Easy to use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time intensive</li> <li>• There is fear around using disability hub or DB101</li> </ul>
Used	Suggestions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When I don't know the answer to something</li> <li>• When looking for information to bring back to clients</li> <li>• With clients to show them about services and supports</li> <li>• As a last resort</li> <li>• For benefits analysis</li> <li>• Watch the videos with the clients</li> <li>• To give people the education to make informed decisions about their life and their benefits</li> <li>• To give people a picture of what their life could look like without services and breaks down the long term</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It would be great to use this as a database for all government documents and which would allow people to navigate providers and services within one system</li> <li>• Stop changing the name. It is confusing and it is not clear if they are connected are separate resources</li> </ul>

Table 17 lists how and when professional supports utilize Disability Hub or DB101 as employment resources

Table 18: Resource Needs for Support Professionals	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• List of remote jobs available</li> <li>• Information on social security</li> <li>• Training on working while maintaining benefits</li> <li>• Examples of competitive employment</li> <li>• Having resources in different languages</li> <li>• Easy to read pamphlets on services that are intertwined with employment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Customized employment training</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Griffin Hammis (Expensive, time intensive)</li> <li>○ Mark Gould Associates methods (Expensive, time intensive)</li> <li>○ VRS created their own model because there were some gaps in the trainings like follow up and universal design for learning</li> <li>○ Minnesota Customized Employment includes mentorship and is offered 4 times a year</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Table 18 lists resources support professionals reported needing

## **Data Collection Method 3: Employer Informational Interviews**

### **Employer Informational Interview Process**

The MRQC staff conducted 16 interviews with employers across Hennepin, Scott, and Dakota Counties. Employers ranged from small, family-owned businesses, to local franchises, to regional chain stores. The list of questions asked in these interviews can be made available upon request.

These interviews were conducted between 1/2020 – 3/2020 and ended due to the onset of COVID-19.

### **Employer Informational Interview Results:**

#### **General Themes**

- Many of the positions held in these interviews were the janitorial, customer service, cashier/bagging –type positions.
- Multiple employers mentioned that it was important to employ people with disabilities because they had a family member with a disability. Other reasons given for employing people with disabilities were: they are the right fit, they can contribute to our team, they bring skills and talents, and employers want to help people develop skills. A number of employers didn't have or know a reason for employing people with disabilities.
- It is hard for employers to know how many employers have disabilities because some chose not to disclose.
- Most of the employers interviewed didn't know how long they have worked with people with disabilities. Many mentioned longer than they had been there, ranging from 4 to 30 years. Others said their business had worked with people with disabilities since they opened.
- Employers typically do not know what their employee makes if they are contracted.
- Employers tend to assume people with disabilities are unable to perform tasks of a supervisor.
- Employees may have “baggage” (trauma) from negative experiences with different employers that negatively impact their work or attitude.

### **Best Practices/Successes**

#### **Employer Hiring Practices**

- Be prepared to communicate with people who speak differently than you do. This may be using plain language, utilizing an interpreter, or adaptive technology.
- Invite the applicant to come check the job out ahead of time - tour, shadow, volunteer, etc. This gives them a better idea of the job before they spend time applying or interviewing.

- Be flexible in the application process and offer multiple ways to apply for the position because not everyone will be able to fill out an application or access it online.
- Relax the interview process by having conversations and keep the interview casual. Make accommodations such as sending the questions ahead of time or including the job coach. Consider that not all people are going to be able to do a phone interview. Think of other ways to interview the candidate. Offer mock interviews to help applicants feel comfortable and prepared.
- Get to know the applicant or new hire. Ask questions such as: *What are they interested in? What are their strengths? Where do they have experience? Where do they want to build experience?* Use this information to tailor a job description to one where they can be successful and their strengths will show.
- Include the applicant's future supervisor in the interview process so that there are no surprises and all parties are on the same page

### **Person-Centered Practices/Accommodations**

- Communicate often and clearly. Have frequent check-ins with the employee to understand how things are going; make changes as soon as the need arises, and to make the employee feel supported. This is a good way to keep expectations clear and reinforced
- Get to know employee on a personal level. Ask how they like to learn and implement that in training, onboarding, and daily tasks. By supporting their specific learning style, they will be more comfortable in their role, are trained in faster, and feel like a valued member of the team.
- Discuss career goals and aspirations. By understanding what makes the employee "tick" you can tailor jobs to their interests helping their work feel meaningful to them.
- Offer roles with flexibility or consistent tasks or routine items that fit your employees. By learning if your employee likes flexible work duties or consistent and routine tasks, you will avoid overwhelming them or boring them.
- Offer positions that build on the employee's strengths, not weaknesses. This will help the employee feel they are able to do a good job and set up for success, not failure.
- Offer opportunities to try different positions. People often don't know what they are good at or what they enjoy until they try.
- Have flexible hours/schedules. People are often limited by their unpredictable health. By allowing flexibility, it can help them work when they are feeling their best and around appointment transportation schedules.
- Provide mentor or buddy programs. Not only do these programs help train the employee but they also foster an inclusive workplace environment and helps form relationships between coworkers.
- Provide transportation. Transportation is a large and consistent barrier for people to work. By providing transportation in a company vehicle, it can open up your potential

employee pool while supporting employment for people with disabilities who may not have access to reliable and accessible transportation.

## **Workplace Environment**

- Workplaces should have a zero-tolerance policy regarding discrimination from customers and employees. Customers can be rude and impatient with people with disabilities. Employers should have a policy and plan in place to support their employee during these interactions.
- Inclusion and diversity training should be part of orientation. Employers should have policies and manuals outlining your work place's zero tolerance for discrimination. To have the most success, take messaging beyond orientation and annual meetings - have frequent conversations with all employees to build trust and communicate often the expectations around exclusion and discrimination.
- Get to know the strengths and weaknesses of the employee. Highlight their strengths and tailor their job descriptions towards them. This will set them up for success and make them feel like a valued member of the team.
- When the person is hired, communicate with their future team. Remind them of policies, expectations, and consequences if not followed. Set the foundation for an understanding and supportive work environment.
- Foster a positive workplace environment where all staff are invited to formal and informal work gatherings, feel part of the team, and can build trust. Supervisors and managers should lead by example.

## **Employers Working with Job Coaches**

- Be patient, flexible, and open-minded when working with job coaches.
- Communicate with employee and job coach clearly, consistently, and frequently. Communication about the employee should be directed at the employee, not the job coach.
- The Job coach should be familiar with the job description before starting. The employer should have clear ground rules and expectations to set the job coach up for success. Knowing the job description and expectations allows the job coach to support the employee confidently. Similarly, the job coach should go through the same orientation and training process as the employee they are supporting. This will give them the skills and understanding of the position to provide tailored support.
- Job coaches should get to know the employer and the employee and form personal connections early on. This will help build trust and rapport between the three.

## Challenges / Barriers

### For Employees

- Filling out or accessing the application. Many applications are only offered online and are difficult to understand or fill out.
- Attendance due to health, lack of staffing, and/or lack of accessible transportation are huge barriers for employees with disabilities.
- Customers being rude or impatient can be very difficult for employees, especially if their place of employment doesn't have a plan or procedure outlining how to respond during these difficult interactions.
- Job coach turnover is high, making it hard to get to know the job coach and build trust and a relationship. With high job coach turnover, there are inconsistent levels of support and skill from the different job coaches, which affects employees greatly due to the lack of routine and stability.
- Lack of job variability can be boring and doesn't build new skills.
- Employer assumptions of the employee's abilities, rather than actual skill or desire, limit employees experience or career projection.
- It is hard for employees to make the income they deserve while maintaining benefits.

### For Employers

- It can be hard to find good workers.
- Employers want to pay their employee fairly but this often threatens their benefits.
- Some employers saw hiring people with disabilities as a financial risk. A business may have to devote extra time and resources to help the employee be successful in their position. This can specifically be harder for smaller businesses, especially if the job isn't a good fit for the employee.
- If the employee is not able to do the full job description, it can be a challenge for some workplaces. Some employers said they are not flexible when it comes to the duties in the job descriptions.
- Limited communication skills can result in challenges on both sides. Employers need to be consistent when communicating, which takes time and effort.
- Lack of employee availability for scheduling due to things such as appointments and accommodation needs can be difficult when organizing and planning schedules.
- Inconsistent attendance due to health, inadequate staffing, or transportation challenges.
- Employee emotions such as frustration with coworkers or the job requirements can be difficult for employers to navigate.
- Employers are used to the mantra: "the customers come first." As a result, they may fail to properly protect and support their employees if customers are being rude or inappropriate.



- Job coaches can be a challenge for employers when they experience high turnover, poor communication, or do not properly support the employee.
- Navigating management vs micromanagement can be tricky for employers. They need to provide managerial support without micromanaging. Employers also need enough time to complete their own jobs while providing the necessary support.
- Safety concerns can be hard to navigate for employers. For example, justifying the opportunity for the employee's career growth to try something new (such as operate heavy machinery) vs. the safety of that person and others involved.

## Discussion

People with disabilities face many obstacles when seeking employment. One of the most frequent concerns reported to the MRQC during the Quality Reviews and focus groups was the fear of working and losing benefits<sup>3</sup>. Federal and state-funded benefits programs have several eligibility requirements and income thresholds that cannot be exceeded without the penalty of losing benefits, making them difficult to navigate and therefore inaccessible to people with disabilities. These challenges create the misconception that people with disabilities are not able to work without losing their benefits, preventing them from seeking employment in the first place<sup>3</sup>. Without employment, the income gap between people with disabilities and those without increases and perpetuates the cycle of poverty.

Data collected by the MRQC found that employers see hiring people with disabilities as a risk because they perceive them as a liability and they do less and lower quality work than employees without disabilities. In many circumstances, when people with disabilities are able to find work, they are paid significantly lower wages than people without disabilities. The Fair Labor Standards Act Section 14(c) allows employers to pay people with disabilities less than the federal minimum wage requirement (\$7.25/hour), an unlivable wage under any circumstance. The intent of this act is to help people learn meaningful skills and earn income to eliminate labor conditions that led to low standards of living<sup>5,3</sup>. Instead, it has contributed to income inequities and the exclusion of people with disabilities from the community through reducing their buying power and limiting their presence in the workplace<sup>4</sup>. The Fair Labor Standards Act 14(c) also maintains the exploitation of people with disabilities as they perform similar tasks as employees without disabilities while being paid subminimum wage. The MRQC found that employers hesitate to increase wages, assign new tasks, and promote people with disabilities because of this perception. Employers also fear exceeding the employee's income level threshold, causing them to lose their benefits. Discrimination by employers makes it difficult for people to start and grow in their careers. The lack of promotions and raises for employees with disabilities continues to perpetuate poverty<sup>3,5</sup>. The MRQC also found that many employers lack formal inclusivity training during the onboarding process, and there is no set discipline procedure for employees who violate discrimination policies. Additionally, employers do not



have the resources to maintain effective communication, accommodations, and on the job supports for people with disabilities, making it difficult to sustain meaningful employment. These factors compound to make inaccessible, exclusive, and potentially hostile workplace environments for people with disabilities.

Access to and reliability of transportation services is another significant barrier faced by people with getting to and maintaining work. The MRQC found in the Quality Reviews that 67.7% of people struggled with at least one barrier to transportation. These barriers include lack of ride flexibility, limited scheduling and routes, unreliable services, painful or uncomfortable rides, delayed arrival time, challenging scheduling process, and safety concerns. Passengers also report on the embarrassment they feel when drivers spend several minutes securing mobility devices<sup>6</sup>. Public transportation systems like trains and buses are limited by their schedule, which is reduced significantly on weekends and evenings. Additionally, services like Metro Mobility require the scheduling of rides days in advance. These limitations make finding and maintaining employment extremely difficult for people with disabilities, which can affect their health and overall quality of life<sup>6</sup>.

## Conclusion

Employment can promote independence, community connection, and a strong sense of purpose for all people, and especially for people with disabilities. Yet, people with disabilities are unemployed or underemployed at higher rates than those without disabilities. This disparity, combined with income and asset limits, lack of transportation, workplace discrimination, and other systemic failures, results in people with disabilities and their families experiencing poverty more often and more severely than those without. Specifically, Minnesotans with disabilities are three times more likely to live below the federal poverty level than people without disabilities<sup>1</sup>. There have been targeted efforts to improve employment experiences and outcomes for people with disabilities in Minnesota. Unfortunately, there are many areas of employment services, supports, and systems that must be improved, redesigned, or completely dismantled in order for people with disabilities to have equitable experiences.

To improve employment experiences and overall quality of life, there needs to be change in how people are served, supported, and viewed. Simply having a focus on equity is not enough. Systems must acknowledge their history of being founded on racism and ableism, which has promoted segregation and isolation, and perpetuated “vulnerability”. In order to make meaningful difference and truly combat inequity, we must move forward with a critical lens that centers the experience of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color with disabilities in Minnesota. Additionally, we must all confront ableism within our society to establish the understanding that people with disabilities have power and provide value to their workplace.

## **Recommendations:**

To improve the quality of employment experiences for people with disabilities, there needs to be immediate and sustained societal, systems, community, organizational, and individual change. The MRQC makes the following recommendations:

### **Eliminate the Fair Labor Standards Act, Section 14©**

People with disabilities who are working should not be treated or paid differently than their peers or colleagues.

- Employers and providers must not pay below minimum wage.
- Minimum wage should promote economic mobility for people with disabilities.
- End segregated employment and continue to promote integrated, competitive employment.
- Publicly funded employment programs must strive to build the infrastructure and supports needed to phase out the issuance of subminimum wage certificates.

### **Do Away with Income and Asset Limits**

Income and asset limits perpetuate poverty for people with disabilities, negatively affecting access and overall quality of life.

- People with disabilities should be able to make and save money for their work without limits.
- People with disabilities should not be held in poverty to maintain their benefits.
- People with disabilities should not have to give up their benefits or earn less income if they choose to get married.

### **Person-Centeredness**

All systems, processes, and discussions about and for people with disabilities should center what is important to them. Cultural norms and traditions influence what it means to be person-centered. To be truly person-centered, one must also be culturally responsive.

- Information about person-centered planning should be offered to people upon receiving waived services or employment supports and frequently thereafter.
- Person-centered practices must also be culturally responsive. People conducting person-centered planning must receive ongoing training and education relating to the culture of those they work with.
- Person-centered plans need to have targeted roles and intentional follow-through. Funding must reflect these steps.
- All employment services should be customized to the person, emphasizing what is important to them as well as what is important for them.
- Employers should be aware of person-centered practices in the workplace and should implement them with all staff whenever possible.

## **Education and Development**

We must close the gaps in education and employment attainment for people with disabilities.

- Educators should provide all information available to promote informed decision making to support and improve education/transition experiences and workforce options.
- Increase funding for schools and more specifically special education teachers, equipment, and facilities.
- Intentionally invest in non-traditional career paths.
- Invest in Minnesota's colleges and universities to ensure access and affordability for people with disabilities.

## **Shift Focus to Careers**

People with disabilities should have the support, education, and resources to pursue a career that works for them.

- Case managers and employment support professionals must educate people with disabilities and their families about career opportunities and success stories so that they can make informed decisions about their employment
- People with disabilities should have the opportunities to build skills, experience, and understanding of different employment options through practices such as volunteering and job shadowing
- Employers must provide equal career advancement opportunities for people with disabilities such as trainings, skill development, and promotions

## **Challenge Traditional Employment**

Providing flexibility and options for employees can improve their experiences, workplace environments, and employment outcomes.

- Provide opportunities for people with disabilities to volunteer in roles (if they desire).
- Offer flexible hours and remote work options for each employee.
- Work with employees to provide a tailored job description to emphasize their strengths and focus on their interests and career goals.

## **Simplify the System**

The employment systems for people with disabilities are convoluted and confusing. The partnership between the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), State Services for the Blind (SSB), and the Department of Human Services (DHS) is a start but it cannot stop there.

- Partnership should outline specific strategies for tackling the racism and ableism that permeate our service system.

- Messaging and instructions for accessing services needs to be written in plain language and must be direct, consistent, and straightforward.
- Messaging must be widely available in multiple languages and formats.
- All employment options must be clearly laid out to people with disabilities and their families from the beginning of the job search process, supporting informed-decision making.
- Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) should have the funding, staffing, and resources so that people do not experience long waiting lists before they receive services.
- There must be an evaluation process to ensure high quality services and so that people are not receiving services for years without finding employment.

## **Customized Employment**

Customized employment is the gold standard of employment support for people with disabilities. Customized employment utilizes tools and techniques within three stages - discovery, job development, and systematic instruction - to help people with disabilities gain competitive employment that works for them.

- All people with disabilities and their families should know what customized employment is and how to access it.
- All people who access employment services should receive the option of customized employment services.
- Customized employment training should be offered at a sliding scale to accommodate smaller provider organizations and make these services more widely available to people with disabilities.

## **Foster a Positive Workplace Environment**

Workplace environment is one of the leading indicators of employment satisfaction. For Businesses, organizations, state agencies:

- All staff, including HR professionals, leadership, marketing staff, program staff, and other workers, should participate in people-first language training.
- All staff should participate in frequent and comprehensive diversity and inclusion training.
- All staff should be invited, welcomed, and part of organized events such as holiday parties, happy hours, and celebrations.
- Leadership should be leading inclusion efforts with all staff by example.
- Develop a creative plan for success that fits the unique needs of each employee.
- Options should be available for employees to process, talk about, and work through their emotions and mental health experiences as it relates to their position or workplace.
- Facilitate networking groups for businesses to share best practices and problem solve to overcome barriers and challenges that arise employing people with disabilities.

## Universal Design

Universal design involves creating an environment that is welcoming and accessible to all.

- All businesses should implement universal design to improve the experiences of all employees.
- State funding should be available to support businesses in implementing universal design.

## Next Steps

It is clear there are many efforts, supports, and services currently in place to help support people with disabilities develop skills, prepare for employment, find potential positions, and maintain/be successful on the job. As noted throughout this report, there is clearly room for improvement in employment services and supports in the areas of equity, informed decision-making, customized services, and targeted follow through.

While gathering information for this report, the Metro Regional Quality Council recognized that ableism is rampant in our society and, as a result, skews the perception of people with disabilities within the workforce. Too often, people in our society see others with disabilities as incapable or unworthy of working or pursuing a career.

The MRQC is working to change the narrative around employing people with disabilities away from one of deficit to one that emphasizes power and capability. The council has started this work by providing information, resources, and tools to support employers and the general public better understand the benefits and skills people with disabilities bring to their position, place of employment, and broader communities.

Another way the MRQC is challenging this narrative is through the We Work! Employment Campaign. This campaign will be a series of short videos from different stakeholder groups such as self-advocates/people with disabilities, family members of people with disabilities, employers, providers, and council members. The videos will be a progression through employment experiences, emphasizing capability and power while also bringing to light current exploitative, yet legal, practices. The purpose of the We Work! campaign is to educate the public and employers on the benefits and best practices of employing people with disabilities.

Videos will be posted on the Metro Regional Quality Council website and social media and we will partner with The Arc Minnesota to share the videos through their social media and communication networks.

The Metro Regional Quality Council envisions a future where people with disabilities are seen for their strengths and contributions to their workplace. A future where people with disabilities are not kept in poverty and their careers are not limited by ablest leadership. A future where there is truly equity and justice for all people with disabilities.

## Appendix

### Appendix A: Waiver Types

**Alternative Care (AC) Waiver** – State-funded cost-sharing program that supports certain home and community based services for individuals age 65 and over. This program provides services to prevent and delay transitions to nursing facility level of care. The program prevents the impoverishment of eligible seniors and shares the cost of care with clients by maximizing use of their own resources.

**Brain Injury (BI) Waiver** - Provides funding for individualized supports for individuals with brain injury. Individuals must require the level of care provided in a nursing home or neurobehavioral hospital.

**Community Alternative Care (CAC) Waiver** - Provides home and community-based services to children and adults who are chronically ill or medically fragile and require the level of care provided in a hospital. These services are an alternative to institutionalization.

**Community Alternatives for Disabled Individuals (CADI) Waiver** – Provides funding for individuals with disabilities who live in the community but require a nursing home level of care.

**Developmental Disabilities (DD) Waiver** - Provides funding for home and community-based services for children and adults with developmental disabilities or related conditions.

**Essential Community Supports** – Available for those who need services to live in the community and meet certain eligibility rules. It is designed for people who do not need the level of care provided in a nursing home. You may qualify for up to \$424 a month for services and supports.

**Elderly Waiver (EW)** – Funds home and community based services for people age 65 and older who are eligible for Medical Assistance (MA) and require the level of care provided in a nursing home, but choose to reside in the community.

**Home Care Services** - Covers the following services: skilled nurse visits, home health aide (HHA) visits, home care nursing (HCN), home care therapies. Members are eligible under Medical Assistance, Minnesota Care, or Waivered Service Programs.

## Appendix B: Selected for Interview Letter

Date:  
Interviewee Name  
Address

Dear (Interviewee Name):

You have been randomly selected by the Metro Regional Quality Council, in partnership with the Department of Human Services (DHS), to participate in an interview about your quality of life. The Metro Regional Quality Council is a group made up of people with disabilities, their families, county workers, DHS, community members, service providers and the Office of Ombudsman for Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities in Hennepin, Scott and Dakota counties.

The purpose of this interview is to learn about services and supports in our Region. We want to learn from you what is going well and how much choice and control people you have in their lives. We also want to know what is not going well and what you would like to change in your life. Participation in the interview is optional and will not affect the services you currently receive.

Staff and volunteers from the Metro Regional Quality Council will call you to ask if you are interested in participating and will schedule the interview. During the interview, staff will meet with you to find out what is most important to you and if you are happy with how things are going in your life. You may choose to invite a person in your life to sit in on the interview with you.

Should you choose to participate in our interview, we will ask you if you are your own guardian, or if you have a court appointed guardian. If you have a guardian, DHS requires us to obtain consent from your guardian before proceeding with the quality interview process, so we will need to reach out to them.

**PLEASE NOTE:** We will make two separate written attempts to obtain consent from your guardian. If we do not receive the signed consent form, or your guardian does not contact us within 60 days of the second attempt letter being sent, it will be assumed that they have given consent for you to participate in the interview. Please see MN State Rule 1205.1400 for guidelines pertaining to reasonable efforts to obtain written consent.

Information you share is important in helping improve quality of services and supports for people with disabilities. Your personal information will be kept private. Your privacy is important to us.

If you have any questions about this process, please contact Angie Guenther, Metro Regional Quality Council Project Manager, at (952)915-3669 or [angieguenther@arcminnesota.org](mailto:angieguenther@arcminnesota.org). You may also contact Jason Flint, Manager in the Disability Services Division at the Department of Human Services, at 651-431-2386 or [jason.a.flint@state.mn.us](mailto:jason.a.flint@state.mn.us).

Sincerely,  
Angie Guenther, *Metro Regional Quality Council Project Manager*



## Appendix C: Interview Tool: Cheat Sheet

### Interview Tool: Cheat Sheet

#### Housing

- 1a. How much control do you have over your living situation?
- 1b. How much control would you like to have over your living situation?
- *Where do you live?*
  - *What do you like best about where you live?*
  - *Do you live with other people? If so, with how many?*
  - *Did anyone ask you who you'd like to live with?*
  - *Do you like the people you live with?*
  - *Would you rather live with someone else?*
  - *Can you make changes in who you live with?*

#### Daily Routine

- 2a. How much control do you have over your daily routine?
- 2b. How much control would you like to have over your daily routine?
- *When do you usually have your meals?*
  - *What do you usually do on a weekday?*
  - *When do you have meals? Who decides when and what you eat?*
  - *Who decides when you go to sleep?*
  - *Who decides when you go shopping?*
  - *How much time do you have your daily routine for fun?*
  - *Can you change your daily routine?*

#### Employment

- 3a. How much choice do you have over whether or not you are working?
- 3b. To what extent do you feel your job meets your needs?
- *Do you have a job? If yes, what do you do?*
  - *Do you like your job? What do you or don't you like about your job?*
  - *How would you describe your ideal job?*
  - *Do you know of any other job you really want?*
  - *Does anyone talk to you about your job and other jobs you would be good at?*

#### Community

- 4a. How much control do you have over things you enjoy doing outside of your home?
- 4b. How much control would you like to have over things you enjoy doing outside of your home?
- *Do you do things for fun outside your home?*
  - *Are the things you do for fun outside your home what you enjoy?*
  - *Would you like to do things for fun outside your home more often?*
  - *When do you usually do things for fun outside of your home?*
  - *With whom do you usually do things outside of your home?*
  - *Who chooses the things you do fun outside of your home?*

## Relationships

5a. How much control do you have over the amount of time you spend with people you care about (family and/or friends)?

5b. How much control would you like to have over the amount of time you spend with people you care about (family and/or friends)?

- *Do you have family? Do you spend time with your family? If so, how much/often?*
- *Do you have any friends? Who are your friends?*
- *Do you spend time with your friends? If so, how much/often?*
- *Do you get to spend the time you want with your friends and/or family? Would you like to have more time?*
- *Are there family or friends you would like to see that you currently do not?*

## Transportation

6. To what degree is transportation available when you want to go somewhere?

- *How do you get to places you need or want to go?*
- *Can you usually get to places when you need to and want to?*
- *Is there anything you would like to change about your transportation?*
- *Does your transportation come on time?*
- *Are there any places you want to go, but don't have transportation?*
- *If you decide to go somewhere at the last minute to go somewhere important to you, can you get there?*

## Support Staff

7. To what degree do staff treat you with respect?

- *Do staff listen and talk to you?*
- *Do staff pay attention when you want to say something to them?*
- *Do staff take action if you have a request?*
- *Do staff treat you with respect? Describe.*
- *Do staff ignore you?*
- *Do staff raise their voice at you?*

## Safety

8. To what degree do you feel safe?

- *Do you feel safe with the people in your life?*
- *Is your home, workplace, and/or neighborhood safe?*
- *Have you ever been afraid in your neighborhood? If so, why?*
- *Have you ever been afraid in your house/apartment? If so, why?*
- *Have you ever been afraid at work/day program?*
- *Do you know your rights? Do you feel you are being respected?*

## Case Management

9. To what degree does your case manager explain your services in a way that you can understand?

- *Do you have a case manager?*
- *How often do you talk to your case manager?*
- *Has your case manager explained services to you?*
- *If yes, did you understand your services when they were explained to you?*
- *What could your case manager have done differently for you to understand your services better?*

## **Services and Supports**

10a. To what degree are your services helping you meet your wants?

10b. To what degree are your services helping you meet your needs?

- *What services/supports do you receive?*
- *Do the services/supports help you in the house and in the community? How?*
- *What service/supports help you the most?*
- *What services/supports you wish you had?*
- *Are there any changes you would like make to your services to make your life better?*

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