

Community-based partnerships: Capacity-building evaluation with agencies that support adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities

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International and local policies and directives mandate equal access to integrated work opportunities for people with disabilities and mark a shift from institutional-based living to supportive, least-restrictive, community-based living and participation for people with disabilities (Herge & Campbell, 1998). These policies and decisions lend themselves to an increasing opportunity for self-determination for people with disabilities, especially people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) to have control over their community living, work, and participation (Johnson, 1999). However, in order to have this control, necessary supports must put in place to allow true choice and opportunities to fully participate (Wehmeyer and Bolding, 2001).

The purpose of this workshop is to provide participants with opportunities to build skills in consulting methods to community agencies that support people with disabilities to have true choice and participation opportunities. The workshop will present two case examples of occupational therapists working in a consulting role with a community agency that serves people with I/DD in a large metropolitan city. These OTs have been actively involved to build capacity for job coaches and staff members in order to evaluate and improve the agency's employment and community participation programming to enhance outcomes for clients.

Teaching methods for this workshop include rich description of case examples, guided discussion of consultation methods and strategies, and development of group action plans to transfer participant learning to personally relevant practice areas, all of which will use a social learning approach. Participants in the course will have the opportunity to learn various strategies to evaluate existing programming with community agency staff. Furthermore, participants will be introduced to tools for assessing skills as well as supports and barriers of agency clients both in programming around employment and community participation. A revised accessible version Work Environment Impact Scale that was developed with agency staff will be highlighted in its use with people with I/DD to improve vocational outcomes. In addition, specific training and implementation strategies will be discussed for OTs working in or interested in developing consultative roles in practice.