



The University of Texas at Austin

Texas Center for Disability Studies

College of Education

**TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF
AGING AND DISABILITY SERVICES**

**TEXAS MONEY FOLLOWS THE PERSON
DEMONSTRATION EMPLOYMENT PILOT**

Report

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NOTE: Effective September 1, 2016, the Texas Legislature has transferred, programs and services previously administered or delivered by DADS and DARS to the Texas Health and Human Services (HHS) and Texas Workforce (TWC) respectively.

Table of Contents

Project Staff.....	1
Abstract.....	2
Profile of Participating Providers.....	5
Bluebonnet Trails Community Services	5
Thomas & Lewin Associates Inc. (TLA).....	6
Definition of DARS and DADS Employment Services	7
Methods & Limitations	11
Participant & Services Results/Discussion.....	12
Table 1: Characteristics of MFP Participants (n = 30) and Identification of Medicaid Waiver Services	13
Table 2: Descriptive Data on Services/Trainings Received (n = 30).....	14
Table 3: Job Loss among Individuals Employed (n = 15).....	15
Table 4: Components of Job Readiness Skills Training Received (n = 17)	15
Systems Change Results/Discussion	17
Results	20
Table 5: Number of Participants Employed in Year 1 and Year 2 of Pilot.....	20
Stakeholder Perceptions Results/Discussion.....	21
Table 6: Managements Perception about Quality of Employment Services	21
Table 7: Participants Perception about Employment Services	23
Table 8: Why Do you Work?	23
Table 9: Why Participants Like Employment Services	24
Table 10: Why would you tell your friends about employment services program?	24
Table 11: Comments from Participants	25
Overall Impression of the Pilot.....	25
Cost Evaluation Results/Discussion	26
Table 12: Comparison of services received across groups	26
Figure 1: Comparison of services received in both groups	27
Figure 2: VR Services across Groups.....	27
Table 13: Cross tabulation of the Receipt of VR Service and the Employment Status of Participants	29
Barriers/Challenges/Questions	29
Sustainability.....	30
Discussion.....	30
Suggestions for Practice	31
Suggestions for Future Evaluation	33
Conclusion.....	34

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to evaluate an employment pilot designed to help individuals with disabilities achieve meaningful, competitive employment in an integrated community setting. The participants were two providers in Texas, one is a Local Intellectual and Developmental Disability Authority and the other is a Home and Community-Based Services provider. The providers or agencies were required to identify strategies and implement systems change within their respective agencies with a goal of increased community-based, competitive integrated employment for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

From January 2014 through July 2016, over one hundred individuals participated in this employment pilot. Participants received employment services in close coordination with other services and supports provided through the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services 1915(C) Waiver Programs. However, for the purpose of data collection and analysis, 30 participants were tracked. Data was collected from September 2014 to June 2016. Additionally, self-completion questionnaires, face-to-face interviews, and telephone interviews from a sample of stakeholders were used to gain more insight into employment outcomes, services, and systems change implemented during the pilot.

Results indicated that 50% of the participants tracked were successfully placed in competitive employment in integrated settings. Day Habilitation (60%), Vocational Rehabilitation services (56.7%), and Employment Assistance (53.3%) were the three most widely received services by all participants. There was a significant difference in the rate of competitive employment between individuals in the employed group (70.6%) who received Vocational Rehabilitation services and those in the unemployed group (23.1%).

Additionally, findings from this study show that providing work readiness training has the potential to increase individuals' competitive employment outcomes. Providers stated that interagency collaborative effort between DADS and DARS was instrumental in the successful employment outcomes reported by the selected providers. Transportation, family support, and staff turnover were the major challenges experienced by providers during the pilot.

Background and Introduction

Consistent with Employment First Policy, the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) administered a two year employment pilot designed to help individuals with disabilities achieve meaningful, competitive employment in an integrated community setting. The DADS, through a competitive vetting process, selected two local intellectual and developmental disability authorities (Bluebonnet Trails Community Services Center and Hill Country MH/DD Center) and one private Home and Community-Based Services (HCS) provider, Thomas & Lewin Associates, to participate in the pilot. However, due to unforeseen staffing issues, Hill Country requested to exit from the Money Follows the Person (MFP) Employment Pilot Project. The purpose of the employment pilot was to support the providers to implement systems change including Employment First policies and practices to improve employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

For the purpose of this project, Employment First meant that integrated, competitive employment was the primary goal for individuals receiving public services regardless of type or level of disability. Employment services was the first service option considered in the course of service planning and all efforts were made to encourage and assist individuals in obtaining the support needed to succeed in competitive, integrated employment before other services were pursued.

Employment is competitive and integrated. Competitive employment meant the individual earns minimum wage or higher, or the prevailing wage paid to individuals without disabilities performing the same or similar work. Integrated employment meant individualized employment at a work site where the individual routinely interacted with people without disabilities (excluding the individual's work site supervisor or service providers), and did not include group work. Competitive, integrated employment could also include self-employment.

Participating providers were required to transform their organizations from relying on day program services to community-based, integrated employment. The State Employment Leadership Network (SELN) conducted site visits with the providers and provided guidance in the development of provider work plans. Through interagency collaborative efforts,

DADS and The Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) provided technical assistance to providers throughout the pilot. Effective September 1, 2016, the DADS program and services were transferred to Texas Health and Human Services (HHS) and DARS employment related services were transferred to Texas Workforce Commission (TWC).

In September 2013, DADS contracted with the Texas Center for Disability Studies (TCDS) at The University of Texas at Austin to conduct an evaluation of the two-year pilot of Money Follows the Person (MFP) Demonstration Employment Project. The purpose of this evaluation was to determine successful approaches to improving employment outcomes through organizational change activities.

Beginning in September 2014, TCDS collected evaluation data throughout the project activities from two of the three participating providers involved in the pilot; due to unforeseen staffing issues, Hill Country requested to exit from the MFP Employment Pilot Project. The data collected was analyzed to provide information about the following areas: Participants, Systems Change, Results, and Stakeholder Perceptions. Below are the specific prompts for each area.

- **Participants & Services:** What processes were used to select individuals participating in the pilot? What was the demographic data of the individuals served including identification of Medicaid waiver services? What types of services did the individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) in the Medicaid waiver programs and their families receive?
- **Systems Change:** What new approaches and processes (such as, activities, trainings) did the organizations implement effectively to change the focus of service provision from the non-work services such as residential and day habilitation, to competitive employment in integrated settings for individuals with IDD? What were the outcomes and successes?
- **Results:** What was the increase in the number of competitively employed individuals with IDD at the end of the second year of the pilot?
- **Stakeholder Perceptions:** What are the perceptions and beliefs about employment? What are the perceptions about supports needed for successful employment? What

are the perceptions about barriers and success strategies for employment? What was the overall perception of the project from the stakeholders?

Additionally, these questions were addressed.

1. Do individuals who are employed use fewer or less costly services than individuals who are not employed?
2. Does the total cost (to the state) of services decrease once an individual is employed?

Profile of Participating Providers

Bluebonnet Trails Community Services

Bluebonnet Trails Community Services is a Local Intellectual and Developmental Disability Authority (LIDDA) that provides services over an eight county area: Bastrop, Burnet, Caldwell, Fayette, Lee, Gonzales, Guadalupe, and Williamson counties. As a LIDDA, Bluebonnet Trails serves two functions. First, it is a Local Authority, which determines if individuals are eligible for IDD services funded through the Texas Health and Human Services, and provides service coordination to eligible individuals. Second, Bluebonnet Trails is a provider of services, providing Autism services, Community Supports, Day Habilitation, Employment Assistance, and Supported Employment.

Employment Services play an important role at Bluebonnet Trails. To implement and support the Employment First initiative, Bluebonnet Trails developed an Employment First policy. The policy promotes the dignity, independence, and well-being of individuals served at Bluebonnet Trails through support of the Employment First initiative that promotes integrated, competitive employment for people with disabilities. Bluebonnet Trails is committed to promoting Employment First and supporting individuals in pursuit of integrated, competitive employment. To that end, the overarching policy for IDD services is to make employment services the primary option offered to individuals that seek services, and to individuals who currently receive non-work services at Bluebonnet Trails.

As part of the Employment First initiative, Bluebonnet Trails Local Authority and Provider entities work together to promote integrated, competitive employment and support individuals' vocational goals. Both provide information about Social Security benefits and

work incentives to individuals and their families to help them make informed choices over employment. A referral system was developed so service coordinators (Local Authority) and care coordinators and program managers (Provider) could refer individuals to employment services, and to the DARS. Bluebonnet Trails employs and trains employment staff to provide only employment services, thereby developing specialists in the area of employment. Communication and cooperation between Bluebonnet Trails' Local Authority and Provider entities results in improved services for individuals. The Local Authority and Provider work to overcome barriers to employment and build supports that promote success for individuals seeking integrated, competitive employment.

Thomas & Lewin Associates Inc. (TLA)

Thomas & Lewin Associates, Inc. (TLA) provides Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) services in the Houston area, including the cities of Rosenberg, Richmond, and Brenham. The extensive knowledge of TLA is based on demonstrated experience in administrative and clinical practice in the field of intellectual and developmental disabilities. Thomas & Lewin Associates Quality Care Community Services is a collaboration of two colleagues who became business partners, as well as best friends after gaining experience working for one of the local authorities, and providing consultation in the HCS private provider network.

Thomas & Lewin Associates operates 11 group homes in the Richmond/Rosenberg area and two homes in Brenham. They also operate a Texas Home Living Waiver program with two individuals. One of the individuals works part time in the 'What's the Deal Boutique' that was established as a training location in the historic downtown Rosenberg area for all individuals enrolled in the TLA program. Thomas & Lewin Associates employs approximately sixty-three (63) staff in the Richmond/Rosenberg area and eleven (11) staff in the Brenham area; contracts with 20 host/companion care providers in both areas; and continues to grow.

Since 1989, TLA continues to work with HCS individuals in many capacities, and starting in 2014 began including the Employment First philosophy as a part of the mission in the provision of services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Thomas

& Lewin Associates emphasizes the creation and implementation of programs that enhances the individual's strengths and promotes the individual's preferences and choices. This philosophy is realized through the provision of a comprehensive system of integrated community and waiver services to meet the needs of each individual enrolled in the Thomas & Lewin Associates HCS Program. This system emphasizes teaching and training each individual to realize their maximum potential and promote their full participation in the community in which they live, including employment opportunities.

Thomas & Lewin Associates, Inc. fully supports the goals and objectives of the Employment First Pilot Project for the provision of competitive and integrated employment in the general workforce for all participants enrolled in TLA, regardless of the level of disability. Its history in this field has made TLA astutely aware of the significance of employment for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The agency's plan is to become a leader in implementing practices to support employment services for individuals with IDD in the state of Texas. Thomas & Lewin Associates is committed to promoting the philosophy that employment should be the first option when planning the service plan for every individual and providing the supports to produce a successful and sustained outcome.

The TLA Life Development Center was established in 2010 with the goal to secure community employment as individuals meet established goals. Thomas & Lewin opened a second location in the Rosenberg area in August 2013. The provider, TLA, has made significant strides and continues to develop policies and procedures that promote the Employment First initiative.

Definition of DARS and DADS Employment Services

Participants in this project received employment assistance, supported employment and benefits counseling from DARS and DADS employment assistance and supported employment services in close coordination with other services and supports provided through Texas DADS 1915(c) Waiver Programs.

- DADS

Employment Assistance (EA) are services that provided learning and work experiences, including volunteer work, where the individual could develop general, non-job-task-specific strengths and skills that contributed to employability in paid employment in integrated community settings. Services were expected to occur over a defined period and with specific outcomes to be achieved as determined by the individual and his/her service and supports planning team through an ongoing person-centered planning process.

Supported Employment services were the ongoing supports to participants who, because of their disabilities, needed on-going intensive support to obtain and maintain an individual job in competitive or customized employment, or self-employment (including home-based self-employment), in an integrated work setting. Once a successful job match was made and the individual was employed, employment assistance services are closed on the Individual Plan of Care (IPC) and supported employment services are added to the IPC.

Supported employment services were individualized and included any combination of the following services: vocational/job-related discovery or assessment, person-centered employment planning, job placement, job development, negotiation with prospective employers, job analysis, job carving, training and systematic instruction, job coaching, benefits support, training and planning, transportation, asset development and career advancement services, and other workplace support services including services not specifically related to job skill training that enable the waiver participant to be successful in integrating into the job setting.

- DARS

Supported Employment were ongoing support services given to individuals with the most significant disabilities to support competitive employment in an integrated setting, or employment in integrated work settings in which individuals are working toward competitive employment, consistent with the strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice of the individuals. Typically, this ongoing support was limited and available to individuals (1) for whom competitive employment had not traditionally occurred or for whom competitive employment was interrupted or intermittent

as a result of a significant disability; or (2) who, because of the nature and severity of their disabilities, needed intensive supported employment services.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services were any services described in an individualized plan for employment necessary to assist an individual with a disability in preparing for, securing, retaining, or regaining an employment outcome that is consistent with the strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice of the individual.

Benefits Counseling was a service provided to individuals receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and/or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Medicaid/Medicare to understand how earned income affects their cash and health care benefits.

Information provided included:

- What happened when earned income begins, or increases
- What SSI/SSDI work incentives the individual may qualify or to maintain cash and/or health care when earning income
- How to report earned income to the Social Security Administration
- How to minimize overpayments and how to deal with an overpayment
- How to access and maintain Medicaid/Medicare services
- How waiver funded services are affected by changes in SSI/SSDI

Referral Process to DARS from Waiver Providers / Service Coordination with DADS

Within DARS, there were two divisions in which eligible participants could have received VR services: the DARS Division for Rehabilitation Services (DRS) and Division for Blind Services (DBS). With DADS there were two employment related services that eligible participants could have received: Employment Assistance (EA) and Supported Employment (SE). Both of these were located within the DADS Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) services.

A. Any DADS participant interested in obtaining integrated, competitive employment could apply for VR services.

B. By 1915(c)(S)(C), a DADS participant enrolled in a 1915(c) Medicaid waiver that offered EA was required to make application for VR services before receiving EA through a DADS operated HCBS waiver.

C. A DADS participant enrolled in a program other than a 1915(c) Medicaid waiver that offers EA and who wanted assistance finding integrated, competitive employment, was not required to seek VR services, but had the option to apply for such services.

D. DADS' providers provided EA using DADS funds to individuals who had applied for VR services until the VR Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) was signed and dated.

E. A DADS participant who needed assistance maintaining employment did not seek VR services but should have received DADS SE or another DADS-funded service that assisted with maintaining employment, or assigned their Ticket to Work ticket, administered by the Social Security Administration, to an Employment Network (EN) that agreed to accept the Ticket.

F. In accordance with 34 CFR 361.53(8), a DADS participant determined eligible for VR services accessed available DADS funding for services included in the individual's DADS program in the course of receiving VR services, except for the core VR services listed in (G) below before requesting VR funding for such services.

G. In accordance with 34CFR§ 361.53(b) and as appropriate to the vocational rehabilitation needs of each individual and consistent with each individual's informed choice, VR ensured that the following vocational rehabilitation services were available without a determination of comparable services and benefits (e.g. DADS funding):

- (1) Assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs.
- (2) Counseling and guidance, including information and support services to assist an individual in exercising informed choice.
- (3) Referral and other services to secure needed services from other agencies, including other components of the statewide workforce investment system, if those services are

not available under this part.

- (4) Job-related services, including job search and placement assistance, job retention services, follow-up services, and follow-along services.
- (5) Rehabilitation technology, including telecommunications, sensory, and other technological aids and devices.
- (6) Post-employment services consisting of the services listed under paragraphs (b) (1) through (5) of this section.

H. The DADS was responsible for the provision of extended services needed to maintain employment. In accordance with 34CFR § 361.5(b) 20 and §363, extended services meant 1) ongoing support services and other appropriate services that were needed to support and maintain an individual with a significant disability in supported employment, and 2) that were provided by a State agency, a private nonprofit organization, employer, or any other appropriate resource, from funds other than DARS after an individual with a most significant disability has made the transition from support provided by DARS.

Methods & Limitations

The TCDS conducted descriptive, quantitative, and survey analyses of data regarding the outcomes of the Money Follows the Person Demonstration Employment. The project served over 100 participants. However, a decision was made to track 30 participants. A project tracking log was developed by DADS, TCDS, and the providers. The tracking log was used to collect demographic, monthly employment services, and support data on tracked 30 individuals for the pilot. There were 12 and 18 participants from BBT and TLA respectively.

Self-completion questionnaires, face-to-face interviews, and telephone interviews from a sampling of stakeholders were used to gain insight about employment outcomes, services, and systems change implemented during the pilot. The survey included 56.7% individuals tracked for the pilot, seven family members/guardians, three management staff, and four employment specialists. To obtain a more objective opinion of services received and the MFP Demonstration, individuals surveyed included 11 employed and six unemployed participants.

The data analysis included calculations of descriptive and inferential statistics to analyze results. Inferential statistical assumptions included the following:

- Random selection of participants.
- Normal distribution of participants score.
- Scores in the populations had the same variance.

Participant & Services Results/Discussion

What processes were used to select individuals participating in the pilot?

From BBT, in accordance with the zero exclusion principle of the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model of supported employment, any individual that was interested in employment was allowed to participate in the pilot. The twelve individuals tracked during the pilot were randomly selected from over 100 participants. On the other hand, TLA relied on their Day Habilitation Supervisor to make recommendations on which individuals with IDD were ready for employment and thus selected as participants for the MFP Pilot. For the purpose of this evaluation, a decision was made to focus on 18 participants who were randomly selected for tracking purposes.

What was the demographic breakdown of the individuals served including identification of Medicaid waiver services?

Table 1 shows that majority of the participants in this pilot were males (60%), African Americans (53.3%), adults with no guardian (73.7%), lived in rural areas (78.7%), and had a level of need of '1' (70%). Additionally, a majority (63.3%) received employment related services through HCS. At the end of data collection, exactly half (50%) of the participants were successfully employed in competitive integrated settings. The average age of participants was $M = 39.52$ years ($SD = 11.06$ years).

Table 1: Characteristics of MFP Participants (n = 30) and Identification of Medicaid Waiver Services

Characteristic	Frequency	Sample
Mean Age		39.52 years (SD = 11.06)
Gender		
• Males	18	60%
• Females	12	40%
Ethnicity		
• Caucasian/White	10	33.3%
• African American	16	53.3%
• Hispanic/Latinos	4	13.4%
Guardianship		
• Adult No Guardian	22	73.7%
• Adult with Guardian	4	13.3%
• Natural family is Guardian	4	13.3%
Level of Need		
• 1	21	70%
• 5	9	30%
Waiver Program		
• HCS	19	63.3%
• TxHML	8	26.7%
• HCS/TxHML	2	6.7%
• None	1	3.3%
Rural/Urban		
• Rural	23	76.7%
• Urban	7	23.3%
Competitive Employment		
• Yes	15	50%
• No	15	50%

What type of services did individuals with IDD in the Medicaid waiver programs receive?

Table 2 shows that day habilitation (60%), DARS Vocational rehabilitation (VR) services (56.7%), and employment assistance (53.3%) were the three most widely received services by participants. Note that day habilitation included services offered during the day to provide individuals with IDD the opportunity to improve their self-help and social skills, which are

important skills to have to be able to live successfully in the community (<https://www.hhsc.state.tx.us/medicaid/managed-care/home-and-community-based-programs-english.pdf>). However, this definition does not specifically require providers to provide job readiness training as a pre-employment service.

Table 2: Descriptive Data on Services/Trainings Received (n = 30)

Services	Frequency	Percent
DADS Services		
• Day Habilitation	18	60%
• Employment Assistance	16	53.3%
• Supported Employment	9	30%
• Other (Home)	2	6.7%
DARS Services		
• Vocational Rehabilitation Services	17	56.7%

Although 50% of the individuals in the pilot were competitively employed, Table 3 below shows that five (33.3%) of those employed lost their jobs during the pilot for various reasons. Two of the five individuals lost their jobs due to performance issues, another individual lost her job due to personal/health reasons, and employers terminated the jobs of two participants because business was slow. However, one individual was re-employed by a different employer.

Table 3: Job Loss among Individuals Employed (n = 15)

Job Loss	Frequency	Percent
• No	10	66.7%
• Yes	5	33.3%
Total	15	100%
Reasons for Job Loss (n = 5)		
• Performance	2	40%
• Personal/Health	1	20%
• Termination	2	40%
Total	5	100%

What type of trainings did individuals with IDD in the Medicaid waiver programs and their families receive?

All of the individuals with IDD surveyed (n = 17) received job readiness training. Table 4 below provides summary data on skills included in the training.

Table 4: Components of Job Readiness Skills Training Received (n = 17)

Training Component	Individuals who received component as part of job readiness training
How to behave well	82.4% (14)
Getting to work early	64.7% (11)
How to dress well to work	82.4% (14)
Increasing working hours	70.6% (12)
Working through job opportunities	70.6% (12)
Knowing your abilities	76.5% (13)
Conducting a job search	64.7% (11)
Completing a job application	70.6 (12)
Writing a resume	76.5% (13)
Interviewing	64.7% (11)
Developing job skills	70.6% (12)
Setting personal goals	64.7% (11)
Handling money	64.7% (11)

Table 4 illustrates that getting to work early, conducting a job search, interviewing, setting personal goals, and handling money were the least received components of work readiness training that participants received. All of the individuals employed found their job readiness

training to be helpful in preparing them for their current job. Of the 10 participants who responded to the question, “Do you think that this training would be helpful for your future jobs?” A majority (90%, n = 9) thought this training would be helpful for their future jobs and one (9.1%) of the participant’s replied “Maybe”.

Among the participants employed, 72.7% (n = 8) replied that they did receive an orientation on their assigned job duties before they started working, 18.2% (n = 2) replied “Maybe” and 9.1% (n = 1) was not sure. A total of nine employed individuals (90%) said they felt prepared to handle their assigned job duties.

Family members/guardians of participants received benefits counseling and work incentives training to enable them to understand the potential impact of employment on their family member’s benefits. Additionally, one provider organized informational trainings on a quarterly basis for families, direct care staff, and coordinators. During these meetings, the provider shared information about what they were doing, about the MFP pilot, and about the employment first initiative.

To improve provider competence and promote effective collaboration with DARS, a DARS Program Specialist offered several trainings to the staff and management of both provider agencies. More specifically, the topics covered included:

- Overview of DRS/DBS VR Services
- DRS/DBS intake, eligibility & services processes, how to become an Employment Network
- Working with DARS
- Benefits Intensive trainings
- Train the trainer benefits trainings

Systems Change Results/Discussion

What strategies, types of activities, and organizational change activities did each provider conduct with project funds to implement competitive employment of individuals with IDD? What were the outcomes and the overall successes of these changes?

Bluebonnet Trails Community Services (BBT)

The development and implementation of the following were accomplished.

- Intake policies and procedures that offered employment services as the first option for people seeking services (e.g. DADS funded services) at intake.
- Employment program policies and procedures that incorporated the use of the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model of Supported Employment. IPS is an evidence-based, person centered model. Depending on the peculiar needs of participants, employment specialist provided job readiness training (concurrently) as part of employment assistance.
- Informational presentations and trainings about benefits and work incentives, and reporting income to Social Security.
- A referral process that service coordinators can use to refer people to the employment program.
- A referral process to support people who request DARS services.
- An employment program to serve individuals in any program or county served by the provider.
- Close collaboration between the employment program and service coordination.
- A professionally trained work force of employment specialists that provide only employment services and benefit counseling to individuals with IDD and their families. For example, employment staff was trained in-house on the basic techniques, strategies, and methods of employment services provided under the IPS model of Supported Employment. Employment staff received employment training and became credentialed through the University of North Texas (UNT) to provide DARS funded services. They were required to complete three classes, Job Coach/Job Skills Trainer, Job Placement Specialist, and Supported Employment Specialist. Additionally, employment specialists and service coordinators received trainings over benefits and work incentives.

Outcomes

All of the policies, practices, organizational changes, and activities listed above improved the quality and effectiveness of employment services, which in turn, produced employment outcomes for more individuals served by the provider. More specific outcomes included the following.

- Employment services as the primary service to individuals with IDD who sought services.
- Credentialed and trained Employment Specialists provided only employment services to individuals served.
- Employment Specialists with job descriptions modified to include specialized DARS Job Development services.
- An Employment Specialist was specifically recruited to conduct outreach to school districts, organizations, and community groups in three counties.
- Credentialed as a DARS vendor authorized to provide Job Coaching/Job Skills Training, Job Placement, and Supported Employment services.

Success Story

Because of the system change and implementation through the employment pilot, BBT had an additional 48 participants as active cases during the pilot. Of the 48 individuals with IDD served, 28 were recruited in the second year of the pilot with 60.7% (n = 17) employed in competitive integrated settings in the last year of the pilot. All other individuals with IDD continued to receive employment services.

Thomas & Lewin Associates (TLA)

The development and implementation of the following were accomplished.

- A revised mission statement to address the employment first philosophy.
- A revised website and job center to focus more on employment.
- Adaptation of the onsite resale/thrift store to serve as a vocational training center for participants.
- Updated training for participants to include training on understanding employers' company policies and procedures
- Procedures created to provide job support including accompanying the individual

- to orientation meetings and other pre-employment activities
- Policies and procedures created to ensure that all staff, individuals served, and their families are aware of the agency's focus on competitive employment.
- A system (i.e., a tracking application) to track jobs that were available in the community.
- Participated in a video, in conjunction with DADS, to highlight success stories of competitively employed participants within the community.
- A system created to support participants to interact with potential employers in the community at job fairs and potential employment sites.
- Continuing education supported to improve the competency of employment staff and management including webinars, benefits counseling training via DARS, and in-house behavior management training conducted by its in-house psychologist.

Outcomes

All of the policies, practices, organizational changes, and activities listed above improved the quality and effectiveness of employment services, which in turn, produced employment outcomes for more individuals served by the provider. More specific outcomes include the following:

- Culture change related to the employment potential of individuals with IDD.
- Day habilitation activities were no longer just activities but now were seen and treated as activities that can produce jobs.
- Person directed planning (PDP) meetings discuss and emphasize Employment First. For example, during PDP meeting of the participants, staff and families discussed what current skills individuals brought to a job and identified skills needing development.
- Quarterly individual advisory meetings included discussions specifically about employment.
- Regular speakers discussed employment, some of whom were employed participants.
- Awareness of employment was key for all program coordinators
- New employee orientation included discussion about Employment First.
- A paradigm shift in the perception of local businesses with increased numbers of

local employers open to hiring a person with a disability.

- Dedicated staff to oversee the resale/thrift store allowing the employment specialist to focus more on training.

Success Story

Because of the system change implemented through this project, TLA recruited eight additional participants with IDD during the second year of the pilot with one employed in competitive integrated setting in the last year of the pilot. All other individuals continued to receive employment services toward employment.

Results

What was the percentage increase in the number of competitively employed participants at the end of the second year of the pilot?

As stated earlier, among the 30 participants tracked during the two-year period of the MFP demonstration employment pilot, 50% (n = 15) of participants achieved competitive employment in integrated settings. Of the 15 individuals employed, Table 5 shows that 86.7% (n = 13) of them were employed during the first year, while an additional 13.3% (n = 2) of the individuals with IDD became employed in the second year of the pilot.

Table 5: Number of Participants Employed in Year 1 and Year 2 of Pilot

Year of Pilot	Employed Participants	
	n	%
1 st year	13	86.7
2 nd year	2	13.3
Total	15	100

Additionally, among 36 untracked individuals who were recruited by both providers during the second year of the pilot, 50% (n = 18) of them were employed in competitive integrated settings during the last year of the pilot.

Stakeholder Perceptions Results/Discussion

What are the perceptions and beliefs about employment; perceptions about supports needed for successful employment; perceptions about barriers and success strategies for employment; and overall perception of the project?

Two management and four employment staff were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt the pilot was effective along seven core indicators of competitive employment services identified by Brooke and Grant, (n.d.). Participants ranked these items on a 3-point scale (1 = yes, 2 = maybe, 3 = no). A score of 1 or 2 indicated agreeing with the condition. See Table 6.

Table 6: Managements Perception about Quality of Employment Services

Core indicators of quality competitive employment services	Staff/Management agreeing that employment services provided towards employment met this criteria (Average percentages)
Use of benefits planning	100% (6)
Individualization of job goal	100% (6)
Quality of competitive employment	100% (6)
Consistency of job status with co-workers	83.3% (5)
Employment in an integrated job setting	100% (6)
Quality of job site supports and fading	83.3% (5)
Presence of ongoing support services for job retention and career development	100% (6)

Based on the experiences of individuals surveyed, 11 of the participants who were employed were asked to rate their employment support experiences along 14 characteristics.

Participants ranked these items on a 3-point scale (1 = yes, 2 = maybe, 3 = no). A score of 1 or 2 indicated agreeing with the condition.

Table 7: Participants Perception about Employment Services

Belief about Support at Work	Responded Participants agreeing that they received employment support at work (n)
Staff said something nice to me when I did something good	100% (11)
I got along with people	100% (11)
I felt respected by staff work	100% (11)
There was someone at my workplace whom I could easily talk to	90.9% (11)
I enjoyed my work	100% (11)
My boss lets me know how well I am doing	100% (11)
It was okay for me to make mistakes at my job	100% (11)
Staff challenged me to do my best	90% (10)
I learned new skills at my job	90.0% (10)
I talked with other people at my work	90.9% (11)
People assist me on my job	90.9% (11)
I learned things about people who are different from me	90.9% (11)
I made new friends through my work	100% (10)
I learned how to do new things	88.9% (9)

Fourteen of the 17 participants surveyed responded to the question *Why do/don't you like to work?* A majority, 64.3%, identified making money as the reason of wanting to work.

See Table 8.

Table 8: Why Do you Work?

Responses	Percent (n)
To make money; get a paycheck and be independent	64.3% (9)
Social connection/to be out in the community	21.4% (2)
To be happy	14.3% (2)

Participants were asked: *What did you like about this employment services program?* A majority identified the services provided as the top response followed closely by a similar response of ‘services and staff’. Table 9 below provides the common responses of the 16 surveyed participants that responded to this question.

Table 9: Why Participants Like Employment Services

Responses	Percent (n)
Services	43.8% (7)
Services and staff	24.9% (4)
Staff	18.8% (3)
Provider’s Environment	12.5% (2)

A majority 88.2% (15) of all the participants surveyed said that they would tell their friends about employment services. See Table 10.

Table 10: Why would you tell your friends about employment services program?

Responses	Percent (n)
Don’t know	11.8% (2)
To help them get a job	52.9% (9)
Because of my positive experience with employment services	17.6% (3)
Because of my positive experience with staff	11.8% (2)
Because of my positive experience at work	5.9% (1)

Finally, respondents were asked *Is there anything else that you would like us to know?* Among individuals with IDD and family members, eight and three of them respectively responded ‘yes’ to this question. Detailed comments are as presented in Table 11.

Table 11: Comments from Participants

Comments from Participants	Comments from Family Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I just like to work and that is it! • When I get the job I do the job right • I like the food at the Day Habilitation, Arts & Crafts, and exercises that we do. When will I be able to get a job? • I want to work at Fiesta as a Bagger so that I can get some tips • I want to work at MD Anderson Center. • I want to go places. Visit people. I like writing. Wants to work at Target or Kroger • I want to go swimming in a bikini. I like haircuts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great program for those who are willing and want to work • Great program • I hope that the program continues because it means a lot for my family member • I think that they need to teach them more soft skills. For example, teach them name/street recognition, counting, word recognition, and how to identify time. Assist them to overcome some of their challenges about today’s world of work. Communicate more with families about progress and challenges, and how to support our family members at home • The program was very beneficial. Keeping this program going will be greatly appreciated.

Overall Impression of the Pilot

BBT management staff stated that, before the pilot, they were not keeping track of the employment outcome of the individuals that they serve. With the pilot, they established an effective tracking system. Before the pilot, TLA was not involved in providing employment related services. They were also not a Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP). However, through the collaborative interagency effort, the DARS representative provided technical assistance and support that enabled them to become a CRP provider and become knowledgeable in providing employment related services to the individuals that they serve.

Cost Evaluation Results/Discussion

Question 1: Do individuals who are employed use fewer services than individuals who are not employed?

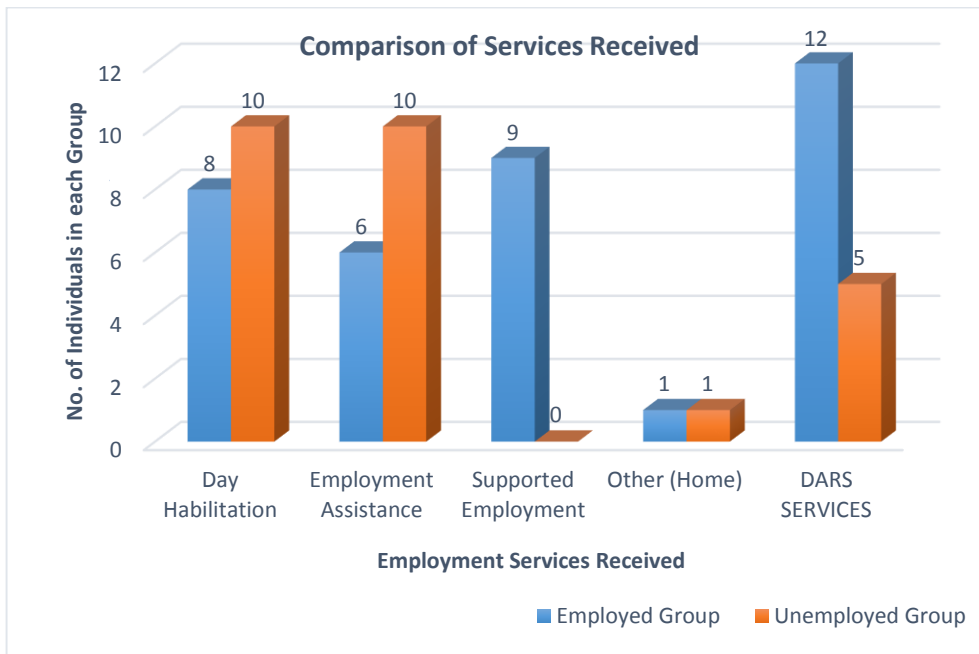
Table 12 shows that Day Habilitation (60%), DARS services (56.7%), and Employment Assistance (53.3%) were the most widely received employment related services across both groups.

Table 12: Comparison of services received across groups

Services Offered	Employed (n)	Unemployed (n)
DADS SERVICES		
• Day Habilitation	8	10
• Employment Assistance	6	10
• Supported Employment	9	0
• Other (Home)	1	1
DARS SERVICES	12	5
• Supported Employment	8	4
• Counseling & Guidance	10	4
• Psychological Evaluation	1	1
• Job Placement	2	0
• Assistive Technology	1	0
• Maintenance	3	0
• Transportation	1	0

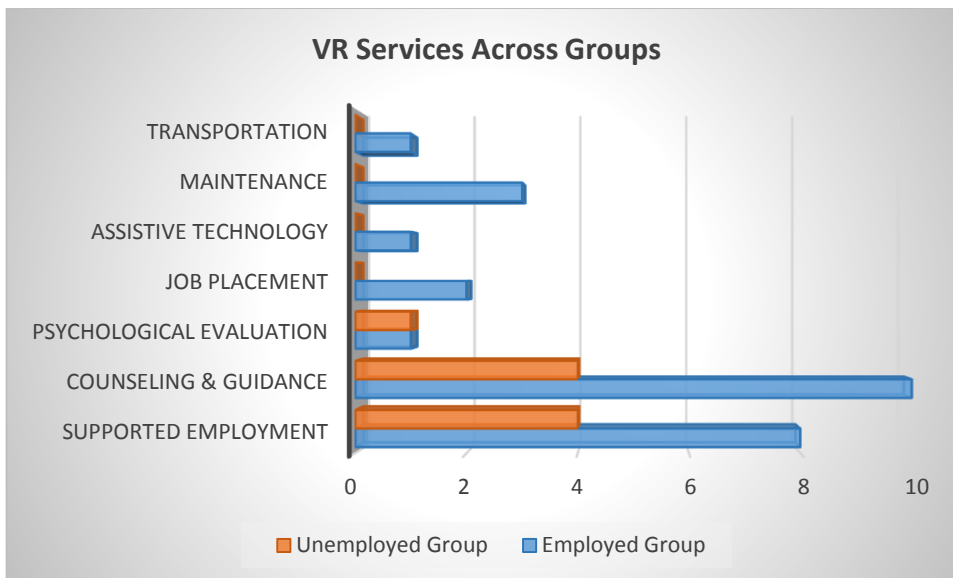
Participants who are employed received four DADS services and seven DARS services. Unemployed participants received three DADS employment related services and three DARS services. Based on these findings, it appears that individuals who are employed received more services than individuals who are unemployed.

Figure 1: Comparison of services received in both groups



The most widely received VR services in both groups were counseling/guidance and DARS supported employment respectively. See Figure 2 for details.

Figure 2: VR Services across Groups



Question 2: Does the total cost (to the state) of services decrease once an individual is employed?

Table 12, above, shows that 60% (n = 9) among individuals who are employed received additional DADS supported employment service for an average length of five months to maintain employment. Supported employment is a service provided to sustain competitive employment to an individual who, because of a disability, requires intensive, ongoing support to perform in a competitive integrated work setting

(<https://www.dads.state.tx.us/providers/communications/2013/letters/IL2013-75.pdf>).

This evaluation found the same number of individuals 50% (n = 15) in each group unemployed and employed. Table 12 shows that in addition to receiving more VR services than the unemployed group, 60% (9) of individuals in the employed group received DADS supported employment service for an average length of five months as an additional service. From this it is possible to conclude that the total cost of services does not decrease once an individual is employed, at least initially. However, because the literature suggests that taxpayers experience a net positive benefit by approximately the fourth year of the receipt of supported employment services (Gidugu & Rogers, 2012) more longitudinal data is required to address this question sufficiently.

As noted earlier, 56.7% (n = 17) participants received VR services compared to 43.3% (n = 13) who did not receive VR service. A cross tabulation of VR service versus rate of employment outcome suggest that 70.6% of individuals in the group that received VR service were competitively employed compared to 23.1% employment rate among those individuals in the group that did not receive VR service. See Table 13 below.

Table 13: Cross tabulation of the Receipt of VR Service and the Employment Status of Participants (n = 30)

		Employed		Total
		No	Yes	
Received VR Services	No	10	3	13
	Yes	5	12	17
Total		15	15	30

Inspection of Q-Q Plots revealed a normal distribution of the rate of employment for both the employed and unemployed groups and that there was homogeneity of variance as assessed by Levene's Test for Equality of Variances. Therefore, the data was analyzed using an independent t-test as well as using a 95% confidence intervals (CI) for the mean difference. Results show that the rate of competitive employment (0.71 ± 0.47) were significantly higher for those individuals who received VR services as an intervention than it was for those who did not (0.23 ± 0.44); ($t(28) = 2.824, p = 0.009$) with a difference of -0.48 (95% CI, -0.92 to -0.13).

Barriers/Challenges/Questions

1. **Transportation** was the major barrier to employment for most of the participants. The lack of public transit and other transportation resources made it difficult to access employment. Also, families were often unable or unwilling to provide transportation that added to the difficulties experienced.
2. **Family support** was another area that presented challenges. Some families allowed their loved one to work but were not encouraging. In some cases, the family (parent, sibling, or other family member) convinced the individual to stop looking for work or stop working.
3. **Safety concerns** were a barrier as some families feared that their family members may be taken advantage of at work or abused.
4. **Fear of losing benefits** was a concern, especially as it relates to Medicaid or HCS benefits.
5. **Staff turnover** was another challenge that providers faced during the pilot.

6. **Hiring difficulties** and obtaining qualified employment specialists was a challenge expressed by both providers.
7. **Current reimbursement rate** structure limited provider capacity to provide quality and effective employment assistance services to participants.

Sustainability

What will it take for you to continue to implement the new effective practices in this program after funding stops? What specific assistance would be helpful to you to continue to implement the new effective practices/services in this program once funding stops?

“Sustainability will hinge on producing outcomes that generate revenue.”

Management Participant

“Continued funding under HCS will be huge in allowing us to provide employment assistance and supported employment to participants. Previous funding for just day habilitation service was not enough to provide such service. Other funding sources include becoming a Community Rehabilitation Professional (CRP), and providing a for fee technical assistance and training to other providers - helping them understand employment philosophy, contracting to provide employment and supported employment in their programs.”

Staff Participant

Discussion

This evaluation found that individuals who received VR services were significantly more likely to achieve competitive employment outcome than individuals who did not receive VR services. Findings from previous literature supports this finding (Bolton, Bellini, & Brookings, 2000; Rosenthal, D. A., Chan, F., Wong, D.W., Kundu, M., Dutta, A, 2006).

Moore et al.’s (2004) study specifically found that individuals with developmental disabilities who received business and vocational training, counseling and guidance, and job placement services were significantly more likely to become competitively employed. It is possible that increasing the intensity of the receipt of counseling and guidance, job

placement, in addition to supported employment could increase the competitive employment outcomes of participants.

Findings also suggest that aside from termination, performance issues were major reasons for job loss among participants. Because of the relatively small sample size, the authors could not determine the practical significance of this finding.

This evaluation found that 50% (n = 15) of individuals were in each group, i.e. unemployed and employed. The provision of long term DADS supported employment services was available to only employed participants. Because 60% of participants in the employed group received this service, the authors hypothesize that it is possible that it cost the state more to have an individual employed than it cost when the individual was unemployed. However, more specific cost related data is required to analyze this hypothesis.

Additionally, this study found that 66.7% of the individuals who received DADS supported employment services had previously received DARS VR services. However, because of the small sample size, the authors could not determine a significant relationship between receiving DADS supported employment and competitive employment outcome supports for participants who had previously received DARS VR services.

Suggestions for Practice

Findings from this evaluation suggest the following as successful best practices that should be encouraged and sustained.

- The interview with providers suggested that the inter-agency collaboration between DARS and DADS was helpful in improving the employment outcomes of participants. Such collaboration should be encouraged to continue, especially as providers stated that this helped to correct barriers to effective service provision.
- Job readiness training was very helpful to the participants served during the pilot, regardless of the model of supported employment employed by the providers. However, findings also show that some components of job readiness training i.e.,

getting to work early, conducting a job search, interviewing, setting personal goals, and handling money, were provided 64.7% of the time. The authors suggest the need for a more structured job readiness curriculum for providers who currently use the traditional model of supported employment. However, for providers who use the IPS model of supported employment that emphasizes a Zero Exclusion principle, providing personalized job readiness training (on a case by case basis) as a component of employment assistance service is desired. For example, BBT provided personalized job readiness training as part of employment assistance services (concurrently) to participants who were receiving employment services who have a need for such training. The caveat is that the receipt of job readiness training should not be used as a requirement for employment services provision to participants; doing so would be inconsistent with the IPS philosophy. The intent here is not to sculpt individuals into becoming “perfect workers” through extensive prevocational assessment and training but to build upon participants’ personal strengths and skills, thereby increasing the success rate of helping individuals find and maintain jobs that utilizes their strengths and motivation. Job readiness training is desirable, especially when the status of research for IPS on new populations, e.g., IDD (beyond severe mental illness), are still in very early stages.

- Day Habilitation staff benefited from training on effective delivery of job readiness skills training. There was the need to dedicate more time in day habilitation to teaching soft skills and other employment related skills customized to meet participant’s needs. Provision of job readiness training in day habilitation centers will allow employment specialists to focus specifically on providing employment assistance services thereby increasing their effectiveness.
- Employment Specialists and job developers should develop collaborations with employers in the community for work-based learning to increase competitive employment outcomes for individuals with IDD.
- The provision of DARS VR service was a significant predictor of competitive integrated employment. The continuous provision of VR service is a desirable service.
- For participants who lost their jobs due to performance or behavioral issues, prior

to future placements, it is important to conduct an assessment to determine the problems related to their poor performance and decide on appropriate intervention(s). Gidugu and Rogers, (2012) in referencing other authors, stated that the “assessment of job problems about deficient work skills, problems with motivation, etc. should be undertaken to develop appropriate intervention” (p.6).

- Benefits and work incentive counseling was helpful to both participants and family members. However, a staff member interviewed during the pilot stated that sometimes family members are overwhelmed with the amount and complexity of information provided. There is the need to simplify the benefits information given to family members.
- Staff interviewed suggested a positive effect of family education, involvement and support in the successful placement of participants in competitive integrated employment. Providers should continue to keep family members informed of participants’ progress, encourage family involvement and provide support to families when needed.
- From the interviews conducted, anecdotal evidence suggested that Employment Specialists who were more innovative and creative in their marketing approach, were more successful at placing participants in competitive integrated employment.
- Evaluate the feasibility of changing the current re-imbursement rate payment model to expand provider capacity and to sustain the progress made during the pilot.

Suggestions for Future Evaluation

- Unpaid or paid internship or training such as onsite training venues may have the potential to increase the successful placement of individuals with IDD in competitive employment. Future evaluation could evaluate the effect of this service on competitive employment outcomes.
- To sufficiently address the question of cost efficiency of employment services to the state, future employment pilot evaluation(s) should develop cost tracking log that uniquely captures cost data for each individual in the pilot. The definition of employment-related costs and what kinds of costs constitute employment cost should be explicitly defined before data collection.

Conclusion

The lessons learned from both providers and findings from data analyses highlight factors that can lead to increased competitive integrated employment outcomes for participants. This evaluation showed that although providers experienced some barriers in their system transformation efforts, they were making strides to change their service systems, policies, and procedures, to support participants in achieving competitive employment in integrated settings.

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