**Statewide Needs Assessment Priority Areas**

The Employment First Advisory Committee utilized a non-traditional approach to developing a statewide professional development implementation plan for Employment First. Seven multi-agency community planning teams representing 12 geographically and demographically diverse counties engaged for several months in an intensive needs assessment process. A DODD-provided facilitator worked with these teams to analyze their current system to identify gaps using a standardized needs assessment tool designed by the Advisory Committee. The needs assessment tool asked teams to consider six distinct topical areas: Family/Caregiver Involvement, Interagency Collaboration, Improving Preparation for Youth and Adults, Person-Centered Planning, Provider Competencies and Skills, Employer Engagement; and prioritize needs based on existing or lacking resources and priority for change. The valuable information gathered through this process is being used to shape the statewide professional development implementation plan for Employment First. Priority findings that were identified statewide and proposed action steps are summarized in the below tables:

**Topical Area One: Family Caregiver Involvement**

1. Families and Caregivers need education and support about community employment as a viable and desirable outcome.
2. Families and Caregivers need information about benefits counseling and work incentives.

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| Action Step | Output |
| Develop toolkit for families about the supported employment process and work incentives available in Ohio like Medicaid Buy-In | Published toolkit to be distributed to families and hosted on the EF Website |
| Online lessons for job seekers and families about community employment | Web course to be developed and hosted on the EF Website |
| Facilitate family-to-family connections and peer support and training for parent mentors in advocacy | Subject matter experts in family advocacy will work with families to help them become better advocates for more inclusive services |
| Family forum on Employment First Website | Add family page to EF Website with forum capability for families to share stories and gather information |
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**Topical Area Two: Interagency Collaboration**

1. Agencies need a system for ongoing communication, information sharing and networking.
2. Agencies need a policy to facilitate co-planning for community employment for youth/adults.

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| Action Step | Output |
| Develop models/template for co-planning policy | Taskforce agencies to develop co-planning policy for the field |
| Develop examples/models of sharing information across agencies – case studies | Taskforce agencies to develop and promote models; specific interagency agreements |
| Navigation tool for families and SSAs from a multi-agency perspective | A tool that outlines the resources available to families from community partners will be developed and disseminated to families and SSAs |
| Use county EF policies to promote networking/collaboration | Include guidance to the field about EF policies that promote multi-agency collaboration |
| Technical assistance on community planning team organization and support | Development of and support for additional regional multi-agency teams throughout the state |
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**Topical Area Three: Improving Preparation for Youth and Adults**

1. Agencies need assistance to provide meaningful opportunities for all youth and adults to explore career options.
2. Agencies need assistance in identifying and implementing evidence-based practices, including customized employment.

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| Action Step | Output |
| Technical assistance on how to develop authentic community-based work experiences | Technical assistance for agencies who provide transition services, including schools and providers |
| Training for agencies on evidence-based practices like supported employment and customized employment | Regional training through EF Partnership with OOD have already been established and will continue through 2014 |
| Transition Framework | Training and TA to LL teams and other selected groups throughout the state on the multi-agency planning process |
| Fact sheet for parents about the transition process | Work with OCALI to develop this tool that families of transition-age youth can refer to when involved in the transition process from school to work. |
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**Topical Area Four: Person-Centered Planning**

1. Staff need skill development in facilitating person-centered planning approaches
2. Agencies need policies in place that promote or require person-centered planning

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| Action Step | Output |
| Taskforce adopts a common definition for the term “person-centered planning” | Common definition created and disseminated to all county boards, schools, providers and other local agencies |
| Develop a fact sheet that describes the various state and federal policies that direct person-centered planning (IDEA, CMS, VR, etc.) | Fact sheet to be posted on EF Website and distributed all county boards, schools, providers and other local agencies. |
| Professional development for staff in person-centered planning facilitation for identifying an employment outcome from assessment data | SSAs will receive training on tools and techniques for person-centered planning and information about the EF rule. |
| Produce video of a typical person-centered planning session for families and job seekers | Video to be posted on EF Website |
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**Topical Area Five: Provider Competencies and Skills**

Top 2 Priority Findings:

1. Many providers do not share the belief that all individuals with developmental disabilities can work.
2. Agencies need skill development in developing personalized career profiles and natural supports facilitation.

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| Action Step | Output |
| Technical assistance for segregated provider staff on specialized topics such as community-based day services, Career Planning, Career Exploration, Discovery | Segregated service providers will learn skills to provide services in community-based and integrated employment settings |
| Training for providers in marketing, on-the-job supports and natural supports facilitation | Web course and regional training through EF Partnership with OOD have already been established and will continue through 2014 |
| Consultation with occupational therapists and rehab tech engineers about assistive technology | Providers will learn strategies and techniques to serve individual with more complex needs |
| Staff Development for providers in customized employment | Providers will learn strategies and techniques to serve individual with more complex needs |
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**Topical Area Six: Employer Engagement**

1. Agencies do not use business-to-business communications to recruit employers
2. Agencies do not use effective marketing tools that focus on the strengths of the workforce

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| Action Step | Output |
| Outreach to county board members to build community awareness about hiring people with disabilities | Subject matter experts to engage with county board members to share information about EF and their critical role in local community awareness |
| Training on establishing relationships with employers | Regional trainings with coordinated job development networks on employer engagement |
| Training on Section 503 for providers – how to support providers to meet OFCCP | Partner with OOD to provide information sessions for job developers |
| Establishment and support for coordinated job development networks | Regional provider collaborative centers throughout the state to coordinate job development |