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INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY INCLUSION

Conversion to Integrated Employment: Case Studies of Organizational Change

Emory Valley Center
Oak Ridge, Tennessee

Ranch Community Services
Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin

Rural Employment Alternatives
Conroy, Iowa

Valley of the Sun School
Phoenix, Arizona

Volume III

edited by

Sheila Lynch Fesko
John Butterworth

August 2001

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The Institute for Community Inclusion is an organization which advocates for the right of all people with disabilities to be full participants in mainstream society. In addition to directly assisting people with disabilities and their families, ICI conducts training, technical assistance, and research activities. ICI is also involved in special projects focused on ensuring personal choice, self-determination, and social and economic justice for people with disabilities.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

O ver the past 15 years there has been increasing national emphasis on the participation of individuals with disabilities in the labor force. This concern was highlighted by the establishment of the Presidential Task Force on Employment of Adults with Disabilities by Executive Order on March 13, 1998. The Task Force has as its mission "to create a coordinated and aggressive policy to bring adults with disabilities into gainful employment at a rate that is as close as possible to that of the general adult population." A variety of recent legislation and policy changes address employment opportunities. The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 was implemented with a broad goal of consolidating, coordinating, and improving all national workforce development initiatives, including vocational rehabilitation and youth employment programs. The Americans with Disabilities Act, the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999, amendments to the Vocational Rehabilitation Act, and changes to Medicaid regulations are all intended to expand access to employment for individuals with disabilities.

Despite these and other policy initiatives on both the state and federal level, employment trends continue to carry both good news and bad news for individuals with significant disabilities. The introduction of supported employment into the Rehabilitation Act in 1986 spurred a dramatic increase in the number of individuals with significant disabilities in integrated employment. In FY99 an estimated 107,000 individuals were supported in integrated employment by state MR/DD agencies, and 28,371 individuals with developmental disabilities were closed into competitive employment by state vocational rehabilitation agencies (including 12,246 closed with supported employment services). The state systems change projects funded by the Rehabilitation Act also resulted in a broad emphasis on change at both state policy and organizational levels. There are many individual examples of organizations that have been successful in closing a sheltered workshop and substantially shifting organizational resources into supports for community employment (Beare, Severson, Lynch, & Schneider, 1992; Block, 1993; Butterworth, Fesko, & Ma, 2000; Murphy & Rogan, 1995; West, Revell, & Wehman, 1998). In FY99 five state MR/DD agencies (Connecticut, Minnesota, New Hampshire, South Dakota, and Washington) reported that over 50% of their participants in day and employment services were in integrated employment (ICI, 2001), suggesting that substantial systems change is occurring in some states.

Along with the significant growth in integrated employment, data show continuing growth in the number of individuals supported in facility-based and non-work services. The total number of individuals supported by state MR/DD agencies in facility-based and non-work services increased in real numbers during this period from 242,000 in FY88 to an estimated 362,000 in FY99 (ICI, 2001). There is also wide variation from state to state in employment

participation. Individual state reports vary from a low of 4% participating in integrated employment to a high of 60% in integrated employment, suggesting that state commitment to employment outcomes is highly variable.

Continuing the expansion of integrated employment opportunities requires a clear understanding of the organizational and systems factors that influence change and expand access to integrated employment. This monograph will focus on change at an organizational level in four organizations that were engaged in a change process during 1998 and 1999. This work represents the second phase of a study of ten community rehabilitation providers, including six that successfully closed a facility-based program in the period between 1989 and 1994. The first six organizations are profiled in Volumes I and II of this series (Butterworth, Fesko, & Ma, 1999; Fesko & Butterworth, 1999). The project was designed to answer three primary research questions:

1. What are the motivators and barriers that have influenced programs' decisions to convert resources from facility-based services to community employment?

2. How did each organization approach the planning, communication, and implementation of the change process?

3. What obstacles have organizations experienced and how have they responded to these obstacles to maintain the change process? What strategies and variables have had a positive impact on maintaining organizational change efforts?

This chapter presents a summary of the research, the experiences of four organizations that are in the process of expanding their integrated employment services, and a comparison of these organizations with the six original organizations that closed a facility-based program. The subsequent chapters in this monograph provide detailed case studies of the four organizations at two points in time; an initial comprehensive site visit and a follow-up site visit approximately one year later to assess progress and changes in the organization's plans. For a more detailed description of the six original case studies please refer to Conversion to Integrated Employment: Case Studies of Organizational Change (Volumes I and II), and to Butterworth and Fesko (2000).

Methodology

The ten case studies, six with facilities that have closed sheltered services and four with sites that are engaged in a process of organizational change, involved site visits to organizations that are shifting organizational resources from facility-based programs to integrated employment or other integrated, community-based activities. The organizations vary with respect to size, geographic location, and the characteristics of persons receiving supports. The purpose of inquiry was to examine the process of organizational change, and the internal and external factors that influence it, in order to assist other organizations interested in pursuing a similar goal. Site visits were conducted over a period of two full days with each organization. Interviews were completed with key players in the change process and representatives of the major constituencies affected by the change including program participants, program staff, family members, board members, funding agencies, employers, and other community agencies.

This study used a qualitative research design borrowing tools from ethnography such as participant observation and open-ended interviews. This design was chosen based on the exploratory nature of the research questions. This section will describe the context in which the research took place, the participating organizations, the data collection methods, and the data analysis techniques employed.

Sample Selection

Participating organizations were selected using a combination of a national nomination process and the results from a survey of day and employment services completed by 643 community rehabilitation providers in 20 states in 1991 (McGaughey, 1994). The organizations selected are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Particpating Organizations

	Organization	Region	Location	Size
	Bonney Enterprises Corvallis, OR	Northwest	Suburban	Small
Closed a Facility-Based Program	Community Enterprises Northampton, MA	Northeast	Urban/ Suburban/R ural	Large
	Life Skills Foundation St. Louis, MO	Central	Urban	Large
	UCPA of Capitol Area Austin, TX	South	Urban	Large
	Independence Association, Brunswick, ME	Northeast	Suburban/R ural	Small
	MetroWest Mental Health, Ashland, MA	Northeast	Suburban	Large
Engaged in a Change Process	Emory Valley Center, Oak Ridge, TN	South	Rural	Large
	Ranch Community Services, Menomonee Falls, WI	Central	Urban/ Suburban/R ural	Medium
	Rural Employment Alternatives, Conroy, IA	Central	Rural	Small
	Valley of the Sun School and Habilitation Center Phoenix, AZ	Southwest	Urban	Large

Data Collection

Data collection consisted of participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Preliminary information was gathered for each site through a phone interview with a lead contact, usually the executive director. At that time available written background information was requested including annual reports, strategic plans, and program

descriptions. Project staff worked with the executive director to identify the key stakeholders in the change process that were relevant for each organization. For a typical visit these interviewees included at least program staff, consumers, family members, employers, funding representatives, and members of the organization's board of directors.

Primary data collection took place during a two-day site visit with each program. For the four organizations included in this monograph these visits took place in the winter and spring of 1998, with a one-day follow-up visit occurring approximately 15 months later in the Spring of 1999. Programs received a stipend for their participation in the project and to compensate them for staff time and effort in organizing and hosting the visit. The project also reimbursed the program for site visit related expenses. Seven senior staff participated in the site visits, with a minimum of two attending each site. These staff were experienced in both participant observation and qualitative research. All staff had substantive experience in conducting research and training related to the employment of individuals with disabilities. Six staff had direct experience in providing and managing employment services and providing training and technical assistance to community rehabilitation programs, while the seventh staff person had direct experience in providing and managing related community-based services.

The project used in-depth, semi-structured interviews with representatives from each of the stakeholder groups to gain multiple perspectives on the change process. Several members of each group were interviewed at each site, either in small groups or individually. In addition, project staff visited work sites, and interviewed individuals at their jobs when appropriate. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed for data analysis. Organizational documents examined included annual reports, consultant reports, mission statements, organizational charts, policies and procedures, and strategic plans. Information from transcripts, observer notes, and source documents was used to describe the organization and the process of organizational change. In all cases follow-up contact with sites by phone or correspondence took place to clarify issues or to request additional information. A draft of each case study was forwarded to the executive director for review and comment before the document was finalized.

Data Analysis

According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992) qualitative data analysis "is the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials that you accumulate to increase your own understanding of them…" (p. 153). In this study two primary stages were used to organize the data and develop themes that described the change process. In the first stage researchers involved in each site visit developed a descriptive case study that summarized each organization's experience. This process involved reading all transcripts, field notes, and documentary materials, and organizing materials according to a common outline that included a description of the organization's current services, the history of the change process, the perspectives of individual stakeholder groups (e.g. executive director, staff, consumers, families, funders) on the change process, and current challenges for the organization. From this organization of the data a narrative case summary was developed and reviewed by all researchers familiar with that site. During the second stage three or more researchers read each summary to identify and code themes that crossed over the organizations.

Results

This summary will describe areas that the original six sites that have closed their facility and four that are in process have in common as well as where they differ and then discuss challenges that continue to face all the organizations. For a comprehensive summary of catalysts for change and themes that characterize an effective change process see Butterworth et al. (2000).

Catalysts for Change

Consistent with other national research, the catalysts for change for these organizations were overwhelmingly internal. The organizations reported the leadership of individual staff, fiscal concerns, and an overall philosophical shift in the organization as the most common reasons that a change process was initiated. Even when other factors were involved, changing values in the organizations defined a clear direction for the change. Successful organizations were clear and strong about communicating their values to staff and others.

Financial Pressures

Many of the organizations studied, those that had closed a facility-based program and those engaged in a change process, were also experiencing financial pressure as they contemplated moving toward community based services. Valley of the Sun Habilitation Center, Rural Employment Alternatives and UCPA-Capitol Area were close to bankruptcy when they developed new internal financial mechanisms, found new funding sources for community employment, and changed the direction of their organizations' employment services. MetroWest considered two plans to address its financial concern. One plan involved opening a larger facility that would involve a large influx of contract work and the hiring of individuals with and without disabilities. The second plan, which was advocated for by two middle managers, called for the reduction of facility-based costs by providing more services in the community. The executive director at MetroWest considered both options, but was influenced by the opinions of his managers. Valley of the Sun responded to its financial pressure by pursuing new funding that was available for community services. In this situation there was a philosophical basis for this movement as well, but the decision was primarily fiscal.

Financial pressures at Emory Valley Center were driven by steady state policy changes. Class action suits against the Department of Mental Retardation services resulted in broad-based restructuring and policy change, including the development of a system of Independent Support Coordinators who act as advocates for individual participant needs. Seventy thousand dollars were removed from the Emory Valley Center budget to fund the Independent Service Coordinators.

Several of the sites looked to other fiscal strategies to reduce dependence on state monies. REA and Emory Valley Center have been looking to expand the sheltered workshops into affirmative businesses that would employ individuals with and without disabilities as a force toward financial stability. Emory Valley Center opened a separate workshop facility in 1997 called Visions. This facility was based in an industrial park with the goal of providing manufacturing and support services to businesses using a workforce that includes individuals with and without disabilities. The long-term goal was for Visions to be a freestanding, self-supporting business that would pay EVC for administrative support. This goal had not been realized at the time of the second ICI site visit. Ranch Community Services spun off a separate entity that will run a fully accessible mini-golf course and ultimately a community recreational center. The mini-golf course opened to the public during the summer of 1999. The goal was for this venture to provide ongoing income to the non-profit services of Ranch Community Services.

Leadership for the Change Process

While all of the organizations had clear leaders, the notion of a single, charismatic, top-level leader driving change was not supported. Leadership occurred in a variety of ways in these organizations. Top-level leaders were effective both as strong, visible individual leaders, and also in less visible facilitative roles. However, middle managers also played a critical role in the change process for several organizations. In two organizations, while the executive director championed the need for change, middle managers actually defined the direction of the change process. Consistent with some business literature, these findings emphasize the importance of nurturing change leadership at all levels of an organization in order for it to be vital and responsive.

The change initiative at Ranch Community Services was promoted by staff at all levels of the organization, but the primary responsibility for implementation of the change fell to the director of rehabilitation. This staff person was described as working tirelessly to effect change and as being successful in defining the original vision. However, her credibility among staff eroded when she was unable to respond flexibly to new challenges. She was unable to support staff as they struggled with the process of change and was ultimately asked to resign. In hindsight, the executive staff acknowledged that the change effort was too focused on this one individual and there needed to be greater openness by all executive staff to support the staff and to ensure that their concerns were heard and addressed.

Characteristics of Successful Organizations

The original six organizations that successfully closed a facility-based program had strong and well-defined cultures that emphasized clear, shared values, innovation, and a willingness to take risks. These supportive cultures were developed and maintained by a variety of concrete strategies, including aggressive strategies for sharing values with staff, outreach to both local resources and national experts, open communication and involvement of all staff in planning activities, and clear support for innovation. These characteristics are shared by the four organizations that are currently engaged in a change process. The discussion below highlights several of the strongest points of similarity with the original six organizations.

Role of Staff in the Change Process.

Staff were routinely empowered to take responsibility and play an active role in the management of their organizations. One result was that parents, funders, and board members described staff as being creative, always having a positive attitude, willing to take chances to make something work for an individual, and driven by values. Many of these organizations empowered staff by flattening the organizational structure and developing self-managed teams. In the four sites studied that were still engaged in a change process, Ranch Community Services and Emory Valley Center had implemented significant changes in their staffing approaches.

At Emory Valley Center the organization made a radical and rapid shift from a traditional hierarchical structure to one based on self-managed teams in order to bring accountability and decision-making to an individual level. Teams were centered around 20 to 30 Emory Valley Center consumers. There was strong institutional support for this change at every level. As the executive director stated, "Self-managed teams are really the only way to very effectively do the things we want to do." The teams were intended to be wholly self-directed, but over time staff requested that there be a team leader who would be given supervisory responsibility in each team. While Emory Valley Center adjusted its structure in response to staff input and external pressures, it retained a simpler and flatter structure that gave individual staff clear and holistic accountability for individual outcomes.

Ranch Community Services also flattened its organizational structure and created teams that merged employment and day services staff, with some teams focused on employment services and others addressing community integration. The original concept of the employment teams was that all staff would "wear all hats" so that anyone on the team could do job development, job coaching, or community support. Staff struggled with maintaining such a broad focus, and in response some staff were designated as being more specialized in job development. Throughout the organizational change process, managers encouraged direct staff input and tried to empower staff to take more control of their teams. Some staff eagerly engaged in these new opportunities while others continued to struggle with feeling their voice was not being heard. To maintain the organization's commitment to a flatter organization, vacant management positions were not refilled and resources were reallocated to hiring direct service staff. A consultant was brought in to train staff on "shared-power" and joint decision making. The executive team also introduced diversity training and initiated "switch day", an exercise in which staff swapped job responsibilities for several hours in order to experience "walking in another's shoes."

Holistic Approach to Consumer Support.
The organizations that have moved to more community-based employment services have done so with a holistic focus on individual needs and preferences. For example, REA introduced a person-centered planning approach with consumers. Emory Valley Center adapted its administrative structure to create teams that were focused on the needs of consumers. By bringing together employment and residential staff into one team, consumers were able to receive more coordinated services. Holistic approaches to service planning were used by organizations to ensure that employment and community activities fit into the whole picture of an individual's life, even if the organization was not directly providing the other support services.

Use of Outside Resources. All of the organizations looked to resources outside themselves to support their efforts. Emory Valley Center participated in a technical assistance project funded by the Tennessee Supported Employment Systems Change Grant and conducted by University of Tennessee. Planning meetings held in conjunction with these activities were the basis for the development of self-managed teams for the organization. The director of rehabilitation services at Ranch brought in a consultant and the organization shut down for three days so all staff could be involved in the planning. Both Ranch and REA visited other community rehabilitation providers to understand how other organizations had approached their change efforts. When it began its first activities in community employment, REA was involved in a statewide technical assistance initiative. This initiative provided skill training for staff on job development.

Ongoing process of self-evaluation.
A willingness to be self-evaluative was a strong theme across these organizations. Self-evaluation was a strong cultural characteristic that affected the ability of organizations to change and engage in continuous improvement of services. The manner in which self-evaluation was manifested was different among the different organizations. Community Enterprises and Bonney Enterprises used formal structures like "think days" and staff retreats to assess the organization and its progress toward achieving its mission. Emory Valley Center and Ranch Community Services kept their approach to service provision flexible so that they were able to try a strategy and adapt based on feedback from staff and observation of the outcomes. Nonetheless, some staff at Ranch Community Services struggled with this participatory process and looked for more black-and-white decisions about services. To increase its staff's openness to new strategies and to share in the journey of change, Ranch's executive team empowered staff to have more of an equal partner role rather than feeling that decisions were being imposed upon them.

Differences between Sites that Closed a Facility-Based Program and Organizations Engaged in a Change Process

Less emphasis on closure of segregated services.

The six sites in the original study made an organizational commitment to closing their segregated services and achieved this goal. The four organizations currently engaged in a change process have placed relatively less emphasis on closing a facility, and have not been as clear about employment being the primary goal of the change effort. While all ten of the organizations offered some level of non-work community integration services, there was a stronger emphasis on offering this option among the four in-process organizations. In these organizations community integration has been seen as a goal in and of itself, rather than a step on the path leading to employment.

REA and Emory Valley Center continued their workshops and were moving in the direction of developing affirmative businesses. REA has acquired several large contracts for their workshop, and was continuing to have both consumers and non-disabled workers hired on an as-needed basis performing these jobs. The executive director at Emory Valley Center anticipated that Visions, the affirmative business that spun off from the workshop, would become freestanding and has raised the possibility of closing the workshop at some point in the future as a viable goal. However, at both Emory Valley and REA, the board did not yet support complete closure of the workshop. Board concerns included maintaining a safety net for consumers who lose their jobs and supporting consumers whom they did not see as being able to move into community employment.

While Ranch continued to have some consumers in the workshop, its goal continued to be closure of this service. The continuation of two services with different values and directions was reported as a struggle for Ranch staff. This conflict was demonstrated by the fact that, while some consumers still received services in the workshop, there was very limited work available. The workshop manager felt a responsibility to continue to bring in new work, while other staff advocated for discontinuing contracted work altogether.

Emphasis on closure.

The six original organizations used either a gradual approach driven by individual consumers' personal plans that included community jobs, or an organizationally-driven approach based on a specific closure date, but were clear about their intent to close a facility-based program. The four sites that were in process have primarily focused on movement to the community and have less emphasis on a concrete plan for closing facility-based programs. When Ranch Community Services originally began to expand into community employment, it set a date by which it planned to have closed its facility. As Ranch began the process, it realized it was not going to meet this time line, and have moved away from a specific closure date.

Individually-driven change occurred gradually, one consumer at a time, and was characterized by an emphasis on person centered planning. A gradual, individually-driven change process was more clearly driven by what would benefit each individual. As a result, the change process was less stressful, and these organizations experienced very little resistance to change from families or other stakeholder groups. Organizations using the individual approach, however, did not always clearly communicate changing values and goals to staff, consumers, and other constituents, and the change process could have been easily derailed by forces such as funding or staffing. The approach also took much longer in some cases. A staff member at UCPA, an organization that used an individually driven approach to change, recommended:

> *Don't tell people you're doing a conversion. Just use personal futures planning. Talk about people's dreams and goals. That will convert it, if you listen to what their*

dreams and goals are. If you really look at their lives and see how isolated they are, how impoverished they are and how they're going to continue to be, unless they have employment.

Several organizations from the original study set firm dates for closure of their segregated services. Organizations that chose an organizationally-driven approach established a firm date for closure of the facility, communicated that decision clearly, and completed the closure much more rapidly. They typically found community employment more rapidly for a significant percentage of the individuals they supported. The goals and intent of the organization were very clear to all stakeholders, and in some cases stakeholders had ample opportunity to participate in planning for the change. Organizations also displayed considerable creativity and experimentation as they sought to implement the change. The tradeoff for this speed and clarity of intent was a change process that was described, at times, as both stressful and chaotic.

Catalysts for change.

The organizations in this volume identified multiple factors that led to the decision to discontinue facility-based services. While the organizations typically identified changing organizational values as a primary variable, all of the organizations identified additional variables, including the presence of a new leader (executive director or president), an organizational financial crisis, new financial opportunities and pressure from consumers to change services. It is notable that external factors including funders and state policy changes were rarely reported to be significant factors in the decisions of the six organizations that had closed their facilities. For the four organizations that are engaged in a change process funding agency priorities and policies have had a greater impact. Valley of the Sun, for example, developed a number of its community- based initiatives as the result of new state grant funds. External catalysts included the presence of new grant funds, state policy changes, and concern about competition from other providers in the area.

The executive director of an organization that completed closure of a facility described its focus on change:

The purpose was about everyone having a choice to make a meaningful contribution, not about closing the facility.... I think we changed in spite of the system, not because of the system.

Clarity of purpose, regardless of changes in funding and other external forces, may be an important variable in affecting substantial change.

Challenges

Expanding community employment requires a sustained effort over an extended period of time. Establishing support from key constituency groups is a difficult process, and leaders need to be prepared to invest in outreach and, at times, to maintain clear and uncompromising goals despite opposition and changing state priorities and policies. The experiences of these ten organizations highlight several challenges that are common across all of the change efforts.

Keep focused on the goal.

All of the organizations studied had to develop strategies for maintaining their momentum toward community employment. Bonney Enterprises found that the year after it had closed its workshop, the organization began to experience a higher than normal rate of staff turnover. The executive director realized that as difficult as the change effort was, staff had been united and energized in working toward the goal of community employment. After their success, staff became disillusioned since they were not as driven toward a goal. Continued efforts at "visioning" were incorporated to help staff set new goals and direction for the organization.

Organizations that are engaged in a change process need to be careful to maintain focus on a clear goal and not be distracted by the demands of the change process and external influences. In some cases, organizations invested heavily in team development, sometimes without a clear overriding goal or expectations for outcomes. Staff at Emory Valley Center, for example, were committed to the implementation of self-managed teams and a more holistic approach to individual support, but were less clear about the organization's commitment to achieving community employment for its consumers.

Use caution in investing in competing services, including community integration services.

All of the organizations studied provided some non-work community integration services. For some organizations these services were an effective component of the process of transition in which all consumers would be supported in community jobs, while for others community integration services were developed as a primary service model. Organizations need to look carefully at their investment in non-work community integration services. If these services supplement the hours that an individual is in his or her preferred job and allow him or her to access services in their community, they may be a good strategy to meet the holistic support needs of the individual. Developing these services, however, takes a significant organizational effort, and may siphon creative energy and staff resources away from expanding employment opportunities. The investment in these services may also make the organization's goals less clear to staff and consumers.

Communicate early and often.

Change processes raise many questions for consumers, staff, funders, and family members. Maintaining clear and frequent communication about the change process, and providing regular opportunities for dialogue are essential parts of any change process.

In addition, as staff and consumers become more fully integrated into the community, communication within an organization becomes more difficult. Some individuals interviewed, including parents, staff, funding representatives, and consumers, reported preferring the ease of finding and talking to people when all consumers worked in one large facility. This convenience does not outweigh the importance of consumers having individual jobs, but suggests that new methods of communicating need to be developed to replace the old systems. Strategies like Valley of the Sun's newsletter were found to be helpful. Paramount in maintaining communication is to acknowledge that employment or day services take up an important part of the day and that all stakeholders have a responsibility to keep each other informed.

Chapter 2

Emory Valley Center[1]

Oak Ridge, Tennessee

February 1998 (initial visit)
May 1999 (update)

John Butterworth
David Hoff

Description of the Organization

Emory Valley Center (EVC) is located in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. Oak Ridge, with a population of approximately 30,000, is located in the eastern part of the state, outside Knoxville. Oak Ridge was developed during World War II as a defense installation, and the federal government and related services continue to be major components of the local economy. The area that EVC served was not densely populated, and the organization served individuals from a relatively large geographic area. The Anderson and Morgan County areas, its main bases of operations, have a total population of approximately 90,000. The 1994 unemployment rate for Anderson County was 3.8%; while Morgan County's rate was 7.0%. Most people went to work by private automobile; there was very limited public transportation available in the area.

Emory Valley Center has gone through a number of evolutions during its 40-plus years in existence. The organization now known as EVC began in 1955 as the Oak Ridge School for Retarded Children, Inc., with the mission of providing educational opportunities for children with developmental disabilities. In 1971, a grant was obtained to construct the original sheltered workshop building, and the goals of the organization evolved towards vocational training, production, and sheltered employment. The day service has evolved and expanded since the early seventies, and EVC offered a variety of work and non-work related day services to adults with varying levels of disability. These included the sheltered workshop, supported/ community employment, non-vocational day programming, a custodial training program (started in 1991), and a food service training program (begun in 1994). The sheltered workshop component was financially successful for the organization, and revenue generated is used to subsidize some of EVC's other services.

Placement of individuals into community jobs began in the late 1980's with funding from the Job Training Partnership Act, Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), and the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation. The agency also provided vocational services for students enrolled in the local school system. Most of the community placements have been into individual jobs. Although the organization had implemented some short-term enclaves in the community, none were active at the time of the site visit. Staff did not see group supported employment as an alternative that EVC planned to aggressively pursue.

In addition to day services, the organization began providing residential services in 1973. The residential services initially emphasized group homes, and in the years since expanded to a wide array of offerings for individuals with varying levels of residential support needs. In addition to the services for adults, EVC had operated an early intervention program for children since 1991.

In 1987 the organization moved to its present site at 715 Emory Valley Road, Oak Ridge. The building was owned by EVC, with construction funding provided by the Small Business Administration. The name of the organization was changed to Emory Valley Center in early 1991 to enhance the public image of the organization and facilitate expansion of services to individuals with disabilities other than mental retardation. In late 1993, EVC began to rent a building across the street from its main facility to expand its day services. Additional sites for day services at the time of the first site visit included, the Advantage Center of Morgan County satellite program (established in 1995), and Visions, an industrial facility in Clinton, approximately half an hour from the main facility, opened in October 1997. According to the executive director, the organization hoped to discontinue use of the building across the street when the lease expired in 1999.

At the time of the initial visit the executive director had been with the organization for 23 years, and had been the executive director for most of that time. EVC had historically been a fairly traditional facility-based organization, and, while steadily expanding the types of services it provided, had taken a conservative approach to change. The majority of individuals spent their days in facility-based programming. In 1998, EVC had approximately 108 staff, and served approximately 189 people in its day services (see Table 2). As of July 1998, 36 people were

Table 2: Summary of Day and Employment Services

	7/94	1/98 (1ST visit)	7/98	5/99 (2nd visit)
Individual Community Employment Currently employed	30	30 (19%)	30 (16%)	42 (19%)
Engaged in Job Search *		6 (4%)	6 (3%)	20 (9%)
Community Participation	–	–	27 (14%)	39 (18%)
Facility-based Work **	80	70 (36%)	85 (45%)	94 (43%)
Non-work day programs		45 (28%)	32 (17%)	23 (11%)
Other***	15	9 (6%)	9 (5%)	–
Total	125	160	189	218

*Individuals funded with vocational rehabilitation funds who were currently seeking employment.
** Includes individuals working at Visions.
*** Meals on wheels, internal food service program.

employed at jobs in the community, 117 individuals attended the sheltered workshop or non-work day programs, and 27 individuals were primarily involved in non-work community participation. The average age of the individuals served was approximately 35, and most had been served by the organization for many years.

Overall, the staff was relatively stable, with about 50% having been with the organization for over five years. For newer staff the turnover rate was fairly high, with most of the turnover in residential positions.

History of the Organizational Change Process

EVC implemented a comprehensive restructuring of the organization in September 1997, following an intensive nine-month planning process. This change dramatically flattened the structure of the organization, eliminating most formal management positions and establishing self-managed service delivery teams that included both day and residential staff. A primary goal was to achieve a more "holistic" approach to services in order to meet the needs and wants of individuals in a more integrated manner. This section will discuss the antecedents and progression of the change process, while the next section will discuss participants' perspectives on EVC and the change experience in more detail. An overall chronology of change at EVC is provided in Table 3.

Table 3: Chronology of Major Change Events

	EVC Event	External Events
1995	Management retreat	
12/96	UT-TIE Retreat (Dale Verstegen)	
1997	Organizational Change Project Teams convened	
7/97	$70,000 removed from EVC budget to fund individual support coordination	Out-of-court settlement reached by DMR with People First and the Justice Department DMR implements individual support coordination
9/97	Implementation of self-managed teams	
10/97	Visions work site opened	

According to the executive director, the roots of the organizational change process began a few years before, when he started to experience a growing discomfort with how the organization was organized and dissatisfaction with how well some of the services were meeting the needs of individuals served by the organization. He expressed in particular his ongoing

dissatisfaction with the types of activities provided by non-vocational day services for individuals who have more significant disabilities. An administrator from the Tennessee Division of Mental Retardation felt that this sense of dissatisfaction was influenced by the executive director's involvement with the state community provider director's association, which gave him the opportunity to see what other providers were doing that differed from the traditional service offerings of EVC. According to the executive director, his interest in organizational change was also influenced by his brother, who was involved in organizational change in the health care industry. As the executive director's brother related the changes that his organization was undergoing, particularly regarding the use of teams, the executive director felt that the concepts might have some application to EVC. As a result, the executive director brought all the managers together for a weekend retreat in 1995. They discussed the future of the organization and designed a new structure using the concept of teams, but they never acted on these ideas.

Involvement in Technical Assistance Project

In 1996 EVC was accepted to participate in a technical assistance project sponsored by the Tennessee Supported Employment Systems Change Grant, and conducted by the University of Tennessee (UT-TIE). Through this project, EVC examined the strengths and weaknesses of the organization, and considered changes within the organization to better meet the needs of the individuals served. UT-TIE worked with organizations with the goal of providing more choices for individuals who were receiving services. The hope was that this emphasis on greater choices would lead to increased community employment and a decrease in segregated activities. According to Dale Verstegen, the consultant who oversaw technical assistance for EVC, UT-TIE did not focus on whether or not to close facility-based programs like the EVC workshop, a strategy they felt would ultimately have been unproductive.

EVC made it clear to Dale and UT-TIE that closing the workshop was not an agenda item for EVC, and the executive director also indicated this during the site visit, stating that he doesn't "necessarily see closing the workshop" as a long-term goal. However, the documents that were developed out of the UT-TIE project clearly acknowledge a movement towards a "change in program design - i.e. moving toward non-facility based and community integrated training." Also, the executive director clearly stated that he would like to see significant increases in the number of people spending their days in the community either in paid employment or other activities. He stated that his goal was to move 60 people out of segregated service settings by July, 1999.

Thirty-two people from EVC met with representatives from UT-TIE for two days in December, 1996. The individuals involved represented a cross-section of staff, and EVC purposely selected some of the staff who were most opposed to any type of change, as well as some of the more positive staff. One former manager of EVC stated that "we purposefully picked the people who were going to be the hardest to bring along [in any type of change process] from the beginning." According to Dale Verstegen, the process consisted of having EVC examine its mission and values to determine what was and was not working well. From there, they identified strategies to address the issues and barriers that had been identified.

As a result of this work, a list of 25 statements defining what the organization should become was developed. These included:
- More client-centered plans
- All people with disabilities have jobs who want jobs through EVC
- Help people develop what they want
- Create a broader base of community supports
- More community-integrated focus

- Develop a temporary employment service
- Services entirely individualized

Among the potential barriers identified to meeting this future vision were a need to "stop being overprotective," to "stop making choices for other people," and to stop "promoting segregated options." Dale provided technical assistance at four two-day sessions over the course of a year, with other project staff available for follow-up. At the time of the initial site visit project activities had largely wound down, although UT-TIE staff were still available for consultation. UT-TIE project activities also included network meetings with other agencies that participated in the project to share information and ideas. At the time of the visit, EVC staff continued to attend these meetings.

Introduction to Use of Teams

After the initial work with UT-TIE in late 1996, adoption of the use of the team concept began with the establishment of several Organizational Change Project Teams. All of the project teams were intended to have a limited life span, focusing on a specific area or need. Goals and action steps were developed for each project team, and once these were completed, the intent was that the project teams would disband. The project teams included:

Team	Purpose
Guidance Team	To facilitate and improve the operation of EVC through organizational change by the formation, development, coordination, guidance, and training of empowered project teams.
Informed Participant Choice/Person Centered Planning	To establish a holistic system for developing opportunities for EVC participants.
Community Integration Activities	To assist EVC participants in becoming involved and valued members of their community.
Level IV Conversion	To aid in the process of converting thirteen Level IV participants to Supported Living, and to ensure participants live in a home of their choice with appropriate supports.
Business Development	To encourage integrated employment for EVC participants.

The teams generally consisted of five to six people, except for the Guidance Team, which had 11 members. A few staff members were on more than one team.

While these project teams were initially developed as a result of the work with UT-TIE, EVC continued to use short-term project teams to address organizational issues after the UT-TIE activities ended. Some of the areas that project teams focused on included revising forms and scheduling. Also, while the initial intent was for all the teams to disband at the end of the project, the Guidance Team, which was chiefly composed of management and administrative personnel along with one member of the board, was continuing to provide support and do troubleshooting during the course of the major structural changes that EVC was undergoing. The Guidance Team continued to meet every other week, and issues were either resolved in those meetings, or project teams were formed to look at those issues.

Conversion to a Team Structure

One of the major outcomes of the UT-TIE project was that it provided EVC with the confidence to adopt the use of teams as the fundamental basis for its organizational structure. A former manager felt that the involvement with UT-TIE was essential in the change to a new organizational structure. "They held our hand. We knew we wanted to do it, we just didn't know how."

After gaining experience in the use of teams through the time-limited project teams during the first part of 1997, on September 2, 1997, EVC changed its management structure from a traditional, hierarchical one with specialized roles to a holistic one where staff in teams had broad responsibility for a group of consumers. While some organizations have adopted team structures or made other organizational changes in a very gradual manner, EVC made a radical and rapid change, from a traditional structure to one totally based on self-managed teams. There was strong institutional support for this change. As the executive director stated, "Self-managed teams are really the only way to very effectively do the things we want to do."

Some of the objectives in adopting the team structure were fairly typical of this type of structure: putting staff in more empowered roles, giving staff more decision-making power, putting the decision-making at the front lines, and taking advantage of the collective creativity and ideas generated by a team structure. In addition, a fundamental objective of the team structure for EVC was to decrease the specialized roles of staff in order to support participants in a more holistic fashion. Before EVC adopted this team structure, staff worked in fairly traditional ways with participants, with some staff supporting the person residentially, others supporting the person vocationally, and other individuals providing transportation. Staff worked fairly independently of each other's program specialties. The team concept adopted by EVC called for staff working together to support each individual in achieving his or her goals, and combined the resources of the day, residential, and other staff working with an individual to form a support network for that person. EVC management staff felt that this allowed the organization to serve individuals in a more customized fashion, with a focus on individual needs. It also enabled the various service components to work in a more coordinated fashion to help participants achieve their goals. The ultimate objective was for staff to no longer work in specialized roles, but rather to be generalists who could provide or organize a broad range of life supports.

In relation to employment, this team structure was also intended to provide the staffing flexibility necessary for individuals who were employed in jobs that did not fit the typical "9 to 3" day service hours. It also allowed individuals to be served and supported in a consistent fashion by the same group of individuals. An example of this, cited by the executive director, was that the same staff member who had been working with an individual in the sheltered workshop would provide job coach support when that individual moved into community employment.

A reflection of this move from specialist to generalist roles was a movement toward a significant reduction in the number of job descriptions for staff. According to the executive director, before the organizational change EVC had roughly 60 job descriptions for approximately 100 staff people. The goal was to reduce this to a total of 10 job descriptions for the entire organization.

The specific structure that EVC adopted in September, 1997, consisted of Person Centered Teams, with Support Teams (made up mainly of administrative personnel and former managers) providing support services for the teams (see Figure 1). Eight Person Centered Teams were established. The teams ranged in size from 5 to 18 staff, with each team supporting 20 to 30 EVC participants. According to the executive director, the preference was

to keep the team size closer to 20 individuals served. The division of participants among teams was based mainly on residential and geographic considerations (i.e., all the individuals in one residence were supported by the same team). The five support teams ranged in size from two to four staff members, and covered the following areas:

- **Administrative Support:** fiscal reporting and accounting, major purchasing, budgeting
- **Team Development:** human resources, training, team coordination
- **Program Coordination:** case management, program evaluation, medical needs, person centered planning coordination, incident management
- **Business Operations:** business development, marketing and sales, enclaves, subcontracting
- **Maintenance:** facility and vehicle maintenance

Figure 1: Emory Valley Center Organizational Chart (1/98)
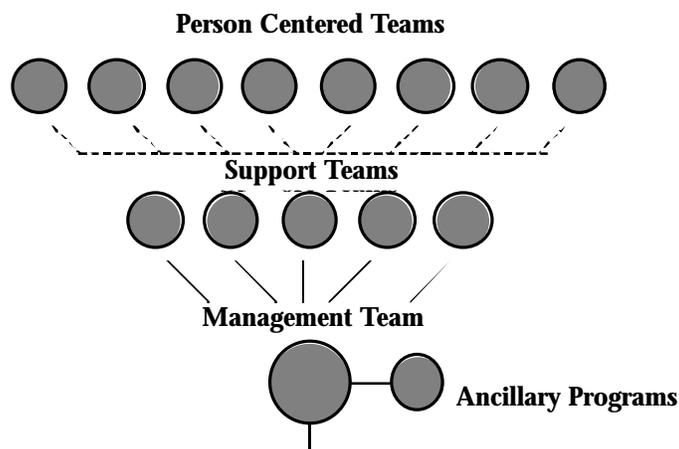
The support teams included individuals who had previously been the supervisors of direct service staff. It was clearly EVC's intent that the support teams not have oversight responsibilities for the Person Centered Teams. They were intended to act strictly in a support role for the Person Centered Teams, so they could accomplish what needed to be done to enable participants to achieve their goals.

In addition to the Person Centered and Support Teams, there were two Organizational Development Teams that drew members from across the organization and addressed family involvement and data collection. Additional Organizational Development Teams could be developed as needed, and at the time of ICI's site visit a Placement Team was in the process of being put together.

Self-Management and Team Leader Roles

An indication of the level of self-management that the teams had been given at EVC were the decisions about the role of the team leader for the Person-Centered Teams. The team leader was not considered to be in a supervisory capacity, and the executive director clearly indicated that there was a strong preference to not go that route. As he stated, "It may happen [eventually], but we would rather not."

The documentation from EVC described the team leader as "the person who manages the team: calling and facilitating meetings, handling or assigning administrative details, orchestrating all team activities, and overseeing preparations for reports and presentations."

Team leaders were paid the same wage as other team members, although the organization was discussing the overall wage structure for the organization. At the time of the initial visit, it was also anticipated that the role of the team leader would rotate on occasion among team members. The team leaders met as a group every Monday.

In addition to the team leader, most of the Person Centered Teams had a Quality Advisor. As the documentation provided by EVC stated, Quality Advisors were:

Individuals that will ordinarily have more expertise than the team members. Their job is to help team members discover for themselves what the answers are, not dictate answers to the rest of the team. Quality advisors will attend meetings but are neither leaders nor team members. They are outsiders and can maintain a neutral position.... They will help facilitate a team's work - coaching team members in needed skills and tools - but not participate directly in the team's activities.

There was a strong emphasis on communication within and between teams. The minutes of the team leader meetings were distributed to all teams. Also, the minutes of each Person Centered Team meeting were distributed to all the other teams.

The level of fiscal responsibility that was given to the teams also indicated the level of empowerment and self-management that EVC intended. Not only were teams given wide discretion in how they met the needs of the individuals served, but EVC gave each team responsibility for its own budget, and the teams had both input and discretion in how the money in their budget was used. When ICI made its first site visit, EVC was in the midst of putting this into place, so the impact of the teams' responsibility for their own budgets remained to be seen. However, it was clear from discussions with direct service staff that their knowledge of the fiscal issues involved in service delivery was already fairly extensive, beyond that which is typically found at the direct service level. They also expressed the desire to gain greater understanding in how funding mechanisms operated.

Family and Consumer Involvement in the Change Process

The main mechanism for keeping families involved in the change process was through newsletters that were regularly sent to families. There had also been family focus groups to get input. There was some consideration of having family and consumer representation on the Guidance Team, but that did not occur. (The board member on the guidance team did not have a family member with a disability.) In retrospect, the Executive Director stated that he was not sure if that had been the right decision. Overall, families had been brought along in the process and had not resisted it, but it was clear that they were not the driving force behind it.

Status of Change Process

At the time of the first ICI site visit, which was approximately five months into the adoption of this team structure, staff roles had not evolved to the point of staff working in generalist roles. Although they used the team structure to support individuals, most direct service staff still saw themselves either as part of day or residential services. However, some staff who had been in traditional day support roles filled in at the residential programs on occasion, and mechanisms were being put in place to ensure that staff were knowledgeable about the support needs of an individual, both during her or his daytime activities and at home.

Establishment of "Visions"

Along with the extensive reworking of the organization into a team structure, EVC opened "Visions" in October, 1997. This new facility was in Clinton, approximately 30 minutes from

Oak Ridge. Visions was originally intended to be a new sheltered workshop facility for EVC. The purposes of opening a new facility were to have a strong presence within an industrial area, to meet the needs of the businesses within that industrial area, and to reduce transportation time and costs for delivery and shipping of materials and products. In keeping with that original goal, Visions was located within an industrial park. However, while the site for the new facility was preparing to open, EVC began to participate in the organizational change project with UT-TIE. One of the outcomes of the work of the Business Development Project Team was to establish Visions as an integrated business, employing people both with and without disabilities. The goal was to have at least 50% of the employees of this facility be individuals without disabilities. At the time of the ICI site visit, about one-third of the employees of Visions were non-disabled.

The intent with Visions was to spin it off as a separate, self-supporting business with no state funding. The target date for achieving this was the fall of 1999. Once that occurred, EVC would provide support services for Visions, Inc., such as billing and payroll, and Visions would be charged for these services.

Visions was organized as industrial space. During the visit by ICI staff to Visions, tasks being performed included attaching cushioning strips to automobile parts for Toyota; attaching sensor strips to foam meat trays for a supermarket; precision drilling of industrial parts; and taping of lotion samples to cards. Some of the individuals served by EVC working at Visions were paid sub-minimum wage based on production rate, while others had high enough production rates that they were paid a similar hourly wage to the non-disabled members of the workforce.

External Factors

At the same time that EVC was undergoing significant structural changes internally, there was substantive change in the Tennessee service delivery system in response to litigation. In 1989 a lawsuit was filed by People First of Tennessee and the United States Department of Justice against the Tennessee Division of Mental Retardation (DMR) concerning conditions at the Arlington Developmental Center in the western part of the state. DMR lost the suit in December, 1992, and as a result, a court monitor was appointed to Arlington Center. In the mid 1990's, People First and the Justice Department filed a preliminary notice of their intention to file a suit that would address conditions at the developmental centers in the rest of the state. In order to avoid the type of oversight statewide that DMR was subject to with the Arlington Center, an out- of-court settlement was reached in July, 1997.

This settlement had a significant impact both on the oversight of DMR and on the services provided by organizations such as EVC. Changes included increased oversight of DMR - funded services, development of a system of Independent Support Coordinators (ISCs) to act as advocates for individual consumer's needs, increased training requirements for direct service staff, and changes in the structure and priorities of DMR funding.

The establishment of the ISCs had the most direct impact on EVC, as the ISCs became directly involved in the specifics of planning and service delivery for individuals. This change also fiscally impacted the organization, as $70,000 was removed from EVC's budget to fund the ISCs. In addition to the ISCs, another result of the legal action was a substantial increase in mandated training for the staff of community providers. While this training was mandated by DMR, it was an unfunded mandate. New resources had not been provided to pay for the training or the relief staff needed to allow staff to attend training.

Funding

In addition to increased oversight, the legal action against DMR, in combination with shifts in DMR philosophy and the recent adoption of the Medicaid waiver to fund follow-up employment services, resulted in substantial changes in the funding mechanisms for day and vocational services beginning in July, 1997. Until that time provider agencies were funded by large contracts with a set amount of money and a set number of slots. Beginning in 1997, funding for all services was based on an individual purchase of service agreement. New rate structures set higher rates for supported employment and community participation versus segregated day services. (In 1998 reimbursement rates were $11/hour for community participation and $13/hour for supported employment, with reimbursement only for direct contact hours with the participant. Segregated services were reimbursed at rates that varied from $6.70 to $8.50 per hour.) In addition to the higher reimbursement rates, bureaucratic hurdles were created as a disincentive for new placements in sheltered workshops. For individuals who were new to the system, with "new" money attached to them, extensive documentation was necessary concerning why an individual needed the services of a sheltered workshop rather than services based in the community.

In Tennessee, vocational rehabilitation and DMR may share the cost of employment services, although this type of cooperative relationship was recent. The basic idea was to exhaust VR resources for community placement, and then DMR would pick up the costs. VR services were strictly fee-for-service, with payment on a milestone basis. A total of $5,200 could be paid by VR for each placement, and this could be billed simultaneously with DMR services.

Participant Perspectives on the Organizational Change Process

Project staff asked Emory Valley Center to arrange opportunities to interview representatives of each of the major constituency groups who were either involved in or affected by the process of organizational change. Some of these interviews took place in the process of visiting program sites, while others were formal interviews. Project staff were particularly interested in and requested an opportunity to talk to individuals who had a wide variety of perspectives and opinions about the change process.

Consumers

Consumers of Emory Valley did not talk about the change in team structure. Overall, consumers who had moved out to individual jobs or the Visions program were pleased with the change in job situations. One man who worked in a local hotel had become a valuable enough worker that he carried a beeper so that he could be called to provide coverage when other staff didn't show for work.

A consumer who worked in the Visions program appreciated the fact that Visions was smaller and "more peaceful and quieter" than the main workshop, and that he made more money. Several consumers who worked at Visions expressed a preference for that work site.

Family Members

Family members emphasized more concern over day-to-day changes, such as staff turnover, rather than the structural changes at EVC. One mother said, "my biggest complaint is the constant turnover." However, another mother noted that "from my perspective, I have not seen a lot of change." While she knew that the organizational structure had changed to emphasize teams, she felt that the changes that had occurred to date were more significant for

the staff than for EVC consumers. Another mother mentioned, "it seems like every other week there's another change. I get used to my girls having one team leader and then there's a change."

Family members mentioned both individual telephone contact and the EVC newsletters as sources of information about the changes. "Mostly at the beginning they would call me and tell me on the phone... they were good at keeping up and notifying. Reading the newsletter they send out each month sort of helped me keep up with things." All of the family members interviewed mentioned reading the newsletters, although they were not seen as a complete source of information. Family members also commonly stated that it was easy to pick up the phone to get more information from EVC staff, emphasizing that EVC was a very open organization.

Despite these avenues, one family member felt that more information would have helped. "I would like a little more knowledge of what's going on. I don't really know what's going on." The same parent recommended that programs focus more on information sharing with parents. "I think most organizational ideas don't include the parents. Some parents really don't care, some of us do." None of the family members mentioned that they were aware of larger organizational goals beyond the change in team structure, such as increased employment or community participation.

One of the parents project staff spoke to was a member of the board during the UT-TIE period, although she did not participate in the retreat. While supporting the option of a sheltered workshop, she felt that every effort should be made to provide community options. In her view, UT-TIE was an important catalyst for EVC. "I don't know how long it would have taken otherwise if TIE hadn't come along." While she felt that EVC was very open about information, being on the board had been an important communication avenue for her.

Executive Director

As noted earlier, the executive director reported that an early catalyst for change in EVC had been conversations with his brother, who was involved in consultation and organizational change in the health care industry. These conversations led him to schedule a retreat weekend in 1995 with program managers. Changing to a team structure was identified as a strategy at that time, but was not implemented. The executive director remembered, "I guess we just really lacked the confidence to jump into it on our own."

The executive director also indicated that the overall pace of systems change within Tennessee's DMR was a factor for EVC. "I have been in this for 20 years, and in the last year I have seen more changes than I ever had." Overall, the executive director saw this pace of change as a barrier to EVC's plans, suggesting that EVC would have been able to implement change faster if the state structure had been more stable.

The substantive changes in state funding and case management were both a financial and practical barrier for EVC. Financially, about $70,000 was removed from the EVC budget as a result of the change. Practically, the executive director felt that EVC had experienced problems with the coordination of supported employment, community participation, and traditional day service funding from DMR. Approval for changes in an individual's mix of services had to be submitted to the ISC and then approved by DMR. According to the executive director, approval from the state had been very slow for changes in service plans, taking from 30 to 60 days. This made it difficult to have flexibility in the services offered, and to act quickly as employment opportunities arose. The executive director had also found DMR to not be flexible about funding consumers across several categories, such as community participation and facility-based services, simultaneously.

At the time of the site visit EVC rarely mixed funding streams from different state agencies in its services. Asked about mixing DMR and VR funds, the executive director reflected a cautious approach to this type of change. "We are starting to mix a little bit almost on a trial basis. They are telling us it's okay, but I am not convinced so we are trying to be very careful."

Family participation.

The executive director reported that EVC communicated with families mostly through newsletters and some meetings, but that families had a limited role in the change process and weren't represented on the Guidance Team. Overall, he felt that families had not had a strong reaction to the change at EVC.

> *Everybody so far has been fairly supportive... we have had a couple of folks who really don't want their kids leaving here for one reason or another and we will just have to work with that. No en masse resistance.*

Goals.

While the executive director was not clearly committed to closing the sheltered workshop, he did plan to close the non-work, facility-based programs that EVC ran. As a first step toward this goal, he hoped to not renew the lease on the building across the street from the EVC workshop when it ended in 1999.

> *I don't necessarily see closing the workshop. I feel like as long as you can have decent work in there and people doing it... I see at least half of the people being out in community stuff, whether it's paid or not paid, or whether it's community integration, some volunteer stuff in nursing homes, and some of those kinds of things.*

The specific goal he stated was to move 60 individuals out of the facility-based programs into the community, including employment and other activities, over the next year, with 15 moving each quarter beginning in July, 1998. He acknowledged that it would be a big change, and saw the state's funding support as important to reaching that goal. "I don't know if we can move that fast, but if the funding is there we can."

The long-term role of EVC still needed to be defined. The executive director indicated a vision of the EVC facility as a base for consumers.

What I would probably like to do at some point is to have somewhere people can come in and drink their coffee in the morning, do what they need to do, socialize, then go out and do their own thing during the daytime.

Self-managed teams.

The executive director emphasized that the purpose of implementing self-managed teams was to foster a better understanding of each person as a whole, and through that to have better problem-solving and allocation of resources and supports. Teams were beginning to cross over day and residential services, and the executive director was encouraging day services staff to work nights in the residential programs to expand their understanding of the individuals on their teams.

> *"We needed to be more lean and mean, [to] just get in and see what needs to be done for the person and make decisions at the person level. Self-managed teams provided a more efficient way to accomplish that. Really self-managed teams is the only way to very effectively do the things we want to do."*

From his perspective, and contrary to what he had expected, the change to self-managed teams had actually drawn the executive director more into the day-to-day operations of EVC. One

outcome was that he felt he had a much better handle on what was going on within the organization than he had previously, "which is very surprising to me because I thought just the opposite would happen." Staff had used him more as a sounding board than before the changeover, when they were more likely to go to their supervisors. He encouraged staff to make their own decisions. "I am trying not to say 'we will do this.' [The staff] have the ability [to make their own decisions]. They just have to have the confidence."

The executive director felt that the teams were still learning about where they should be concentrating their time and resources. He stated that he would like to see "75% of team meetings spent on support issues" and discussions of how the team was supporting participants in meeting their goals, not on logistical and administrative issues. It was a frustration that this had not occurred so far, but he hoped that the team meetings would improve as the teams became more settled in their roles. He also saw maintaining the flatness of the organizational structure as a challenge, noting,

> "We don't want the team leader to become a supervisor...." He did observe that there has been substantial staff growth as a result of the team structure, noting, "It's kind of neat to see people blossoming in this process, people who you didn't hear much from before really taking the leadership."

Overall, it was the executive director's view that the structural changes that EVC implemented had positioned the organization well to handle the major changes that were taking place within the DMR service delivery system. As he stated, "I am really glad we got into systems change when we did," and he felt that it had enabled EVC to be ahead of the curve compared to other community providers who were being impacted by the changes at the state level.

Staff

The staff almost universally expressed positive feelings about the new structure, with the only major concern being that it had not led so far to increases in compensation for direct service staff. EVC had many staff that had been with the organization for a long time, and implicit in many of these conversations, particularly with long-term staff, was a strong level of pride and commitment to the organization. "We do a lot as far as staff, and there are a lot of staff who take these folks out… just to hang out on the weekends." About half of the staff had been with EVC for five or more years, and there was little turnover among that group.

The change to managed teams affected staff who had formerly been in management roles differently from staff who had been primarily in direct service roles, and this summary reflects the comments of both groups. It is significant to note, though, that the former management staff were strong advocates of the change to self-managed teams. Dale Verstegen, the UT-TIE consultant, noted that the two former directors of program services, whose jobs were the most affected by the organizational change, had been the most supportive of making it happen.

Catalysts for change.

The catalysts for change that staff mentioned were similar to those mentioned by the executive director. A former manager recalled the role of the executive director's brother: "He comes back all pumped up and he has us all meet with him on Saturday morning at his house about how we are going to change." The initial two-day meeting with Dale Verstegen and UT-TIE was also identified as an important event. About one-third of EVC's staff participated in this planning meeting.

> We had 32 [people], a cross-section of staff at the meeting… [We] purposely selected some of our staff that were most oppositional. We also purposefully selected staff that were outspoken about everything to be involved.

Staff also mentioned the financial risk of the state-level changes and the pending loss of the case management funds as influencing the change, although the original interest in change and the application to participate in the UT-TIE project preceded those events.

Communication.

Despite the involvement of a significant number of staff in the UT-TIE planning meeting, not all staff had been aware of the planned changes. One staff member noted,

> *A lot of us didn't find out until the next year what was coming. We were informed that there was a possibility that the change was coming. We heard that.*

Maintaining communication was a challenge, and EVC invested substantial resources in communication mechanisms during the implementation of the team structure. Staff referenced the use of team minutes as a communication tool, although the value they placed on them varied. One staff member indicated that "each team knows what's going on with the other teams, and at the beginning of every week... [minutes] are distributed to every other team so you always know what's going on." Not all staff, however, felt that they were connected via those team minutes. Another staff member responded, "We are not getting that communication on our team. I didn't even know that other teams were giving out their minutes until about two to three days ago." Overall, there was a sense that communication was open across a variety of issues including salaries, role changes, and state changes. "There's still some things that need to be ironed out, but the line of communication is open" was a common sentiment.

Staff appeared to have a broad understanding of changes in the organization. Staff referenced the loss of $70,000 from the EVC budget to fund the new Independent Service Coordination system, and noted the impact on their team budgets. Several staff mentioned that although, there had been an across-the-board increase in responsibilities for staff, salaries had remained level. Overall, staff were concerned but understanding about this situation, recognizing that there was an effort to address it, but that the resources were not available yet. "We have more responsibility yet we are not being compensated. It's important but it's a catch-22, because there is nothing [the executive director] can do because if the money's not there it's not there." Line staff also talked about the speed of change in the state MR/DD system as a factor.

The organization continued to struggle with the implications of the team structure for job descriptions and compensation. "We have been in it for six months, people take on a lot more job responsibility, but we have not moved a step toward any compensation." Despite the common concern about salary, staff seemed to feel it was being addressed.

Team structure.

Staff consistently described the change to a team structure as a positive one. Individuals discussed the increased opportunities, effectiveness in decision making, and positive energy among the staff. "I think overall everyone likes it." The implementation of the team structure was also universally described as a dramatic one by staff. One former manager said,

> *In the 20 years I have been here it's been the most dramatic change in my role I have ever had... I was supervising 25 people. They would come into my office all the time, one problem or another, one crisis or another, and that doesn't happen any more.*

Another staff member said, "[the team] deals with the budget, any problems that happen within the team, the scheduling - everything that four or five main people used to do is now spread out within the team." One line staff member perceived the change as being difficult for former managers. "One of the biggest problems I think we are having is [that] folks are having trouble letting go their control."

Although team leaders were not compensated for their additional responsibilities, a former manager remembered initially selecting "people whom we thought were leaders" for these positions. She reported that the leadership resources in teams developed over time, providing a growing number of individuals who could take on that role. "Within the teams we have a little more leadership ability than we had originally to choose from." Teams received only limited formal training in team process. "We have decided maybe we need a little bit more training in team process. On the other hand, [teams] are learning by doing." Dale Verstegen did provide staff with some guidance on team process. "Dale gave us an outline of how you are supposed to set up your team, and each team made [its] own rules. It's been a learning experience."

The team structure had a variety of results, including improving communication and accelerating problem solving and responsibility for change. This was enhanced by mixing both residential and day services staff on the Person-Centered Teams.

> *Suddenly, by putting them all together... I have never heard them communicate so much. It's now our group of clients, our groups of participants, and how can we better serve them.*

One staff member indicated that the development of the team structure shifted staff members' sense of responsibility.

> *We are going through a change during a period of time when the environment is not that friendly because of the funding stuff that is happening ...One of the things I learned in the past is when you are doing something new ... the power sort of goes to the top ... the person who understands what's going on ... We are doing the opposite. We are spreading out the authority.*

Another staff member reported that over time people realized that they had a higher level of responsibility. "I think it is working because people are starting to realize 'I need to be the one who takes responsibility for this.'" This broad sense of responsibility was reflected in part by staff paying attention to the external environment following the change. One staff member for example, discussed the need to be more on top of funding so that the EVC could maximize its income

The change required former managers both to adjust their roles, and to communicate to staff clearly that their role had changed. One former manager said,

> *It is [hard on me] because I have always been one who likes to make decisions, likes to deal with crises. So it's been real different because now the teams make the decisions, and I have seen over the six months that it goes from [people] coming to me with lots of different issues to coming to me very little... I have been trying to say, 'it's a team decision, you need to discuss it as a team.'*

She indicated that the result had been to focus effort on change much more directly. "I have never seen so many things change as I have in the last six months... issues that have been with us for all those years, never resolved, have been starting to get resolved."

The team structure also changed how issues such as staff performance problems were handled. Although the team leader would generally take the lead in resolving the issue, other team members were more involved. The former program managers found that this freed them to be more direct with staff than they had been under the previous structure.

> *We feel like we say now what the problem was or, say, someone snapped at one of our folks and Dottie and I were standing right there, we don't hesitate to say, 'you know, you could have done this a different way', and give an example... We are giving guidance more than ever before, because we feel freer to.*

A key part of the change was the use of project teams to address specific needs such as revising processes or forms. These teams were seen as able to take a more holistic and comprehensive approach to change, and were seen as being more effective. Similarly, the Support Teams were seen as important to sustaining the new structure. "We need to be there to support people. They need that support, and I try to listen to them and what they are saying."

Funding issues.

A senior staff member indicated that state funding rules made the transition to community employment or other community activities difficult. Staff described being required to provide DMR with an advance, day-by-day schedule of all community participation activities in order to receive funding. An implementation plan must be submitted at least one month in advance for each individual to get funding for the new activity. The state also restricted individuals from receiving different services, such as community participation and employment, simultaneously. These restrictions made it difficult for EVC to respond to individual circumstances and new job opportunities. One staff member noted that as an individual moved into a new job, "she takes the job and we don't get paid because we can't combine community participation with supported employment."

Visions program.

The Visions program was widely seen as an innovation across constituencies at Emory Valley, including staff. Staff expressed pride in the quality and difficulty of the work consumers did there. Visions was also seen as having a higher entrance standard: "They have to qualify to come up here."

Much of the work was on a part that would be installed in Toyota cars, and the quality criteria were very high. Staff described it as more than a workshop, with the goal that no more than 50% of the workers have a disability. Visions reflected, in part, a continued emphasis at Emory Valley on contract development. Staff saw the work there as connecting to an overall focus on business development. "Now... we can have the opportunity to get people out better looking for more contract opportunities." Overall, however, there was not a strong sense of integration between the subcontract operations at the workshop and Visions and the process of finding individual jobs for consumers.

Barriers to change.

Business staff noted the strong role of subcontract income at Emory Valley:

> *We bring in $250,000 a year in revenues through our workshop operation... but they are not giving agencies any alternative ideas of what they can do... I think any businessman that has a product or business service that brings in $250,000 a year, you don't want to put a lock on the door and walk away from it.*

One staff noted that workshops that closed were generally not making money, but that had not been true for Emory Valley. "We are one of the very few that have actually built a business out of a sheltered workshop. So what we might end up doing also is spinning off more businesses like [Visions]."

Future goals.

Staff overall were aware that community participation was a future focus for EVC, but across levels of the organization were less clear about what that goal meant or the level of commitment to community employment. The team's coordinator noted,

> *We are looking forward to community participation as a sign of the times, and I think*

one of the biggest awareness we have gotten into in the team leader's meetings [is that] we don't have a good vision yet of what community participation involves.

There were mixed opinions about the goal of moving people into community employment. One staff member felt about the individuals at the EVC workshop,

There are some people qualified for other jobs, but the majority are not qualified for jobs that are going to support them like we support ourselves, and I see [them] getting more into community participation.

There were also concerns about the speed of change.

I think it's important that we take it slow and not take 40 at one time and turn them all into the community. I think it should be about three people at a time.

Some staff noted that the change to emphasizing community employment was a big one for the organization. One staff member reflected,

EVC had never done that stuff before three or four years ago... there was a real difficult tension that was going on between the supported employment people and the other folks, and it was sort of like 'you guys are going to place these people and we aren't going to have any jobs here, and you don't know what you are doing because we have worked with these people for years and you are treating them like they can do anything they want and they can't do this stuff.'

Staff concerns about moving more toward integrated employment were characterized as centered on the capabilities of the Emory Valley consumers, and the future of positions for staff if that change proceeded. A staff member summarized, "Most people at Emory Valley have good hearts that's for sure... the problem is misunderstanding and not enough communication about what's going on."

The support team leader verified the goal of moving 15 people per quarter to the community beginning in July. "...[The executive director] asked Dottie to make it 15 people a quarter, and that's the goal he's set on her." The goal was established by the executive director, and had not been directly shared with other staff at the time of the site visit. "Team leaders are saying that they don't have a clear vision of what it should be like."

Funding Agencies and Workshop Providers

A DMR representative confirmed that the state service system had been undergoing substantial change, resulting in a variety of outcomes. One outcome was a large increase in the number of provider agencies in the state, including a number of large out-of-state providers entering Tennessee to do business. Overall, the state welcomed the increased competition, which DMR felt would encourage providers to progress and handle more challenging people. It was the DMR representative's view that this increase in competition had been at least one factor in EVC's recognition of the need to change, in order to avoid being bypassed by the system. Overall, DMR viewed EVC's changes as important, establishing the organization as more progressive and positioning it to take advantage of changes in funding and priorities.

One result of the systemic changes was EVC's concern about the flexibility of DMR funding to rapidly accommodate new job opportunities and to allow individuals to be funded in more than one service category (e.g., supported employment and sheltered employment). The DMR representative felt that the long approval times that EVC was experiencing were due in part to the newness of the system. While changes should have been approved on a weekly basis, money for community services had been short in the 1998 fiscal year, causing delays in approval. In addition, payments to providers had been delayed due to problems with the new

computer system that was put in place to track the various funding mechanisms. The DMR representative also noted that a challenge for many providers, including Emory Valley Center, was that income from the workshop was used to subsidize the costs of providing services.

In the long run, the legal action and the Medicaid waiver meant that more funds would be available to do more things, including flexible services, the ability to serve more people, and new, higher rates for "more involved" consumers. DMR representatives stated that agencies were being urged to look at options for getting their total population out of segregated services, into either supported employment or community participation activities. It was also noted that DMR had put extensive time into developing a good working relationship with VR and educating VR case managers about DMR, and that VR was open to opening a new case for any DMR consumer.

It was DMR's intention to eventually provide an Independent Service Coordinator for all participants it supported as funding became available. At the time of the first ICI site visit, the use of the Independent Service Coordinators had been underway for less than one year, and DMR stated that the concept had met with mixed success due to its newness.

Board Members

Board members remembered the process of planning for the new team structure as a long one, in which decisions had not been made suddenly. Board members indicated that the team structure had been a regular but not primary agenda item at meetings. One member remembered the presentation of overheads on the change at the board meeting before the changeover on September 1st. "I think the board was very involved from the start of it to when it was started on September 1st." During this time the board commented on the new mission statement, and was visited by staff from UT-TIE and others who addressed the ability of consumers to work. Confirming the view of the change as gradual, one board member saw the changes as a purposeful process, noting, "I think it's a compliment to this organization...that they have moved cautiously, making sure everything works before you go on to another [change]." Overall, board members saw the organization in general, and the executive director in particular, as being effective at communicating with the board during this time. Board members saw the change as having been developed laterally with broad involvement.

Only one board member had been involved in the UT-TIE retreat. This board member also saw the change as one that developed over time, and as influenced by a variety of factors, including internal re-evaluation of the organization's direction and state pressure for more consumer-oriented services. "UT-TIE offered a good way to evaluate our direction, whether we changed or not." He felt that the change had had its hard spots, including the difficulty experienced by management staff who had to move into very different roles. "[The change] was centered around the client, getting the best for them." One board member did reflect that they should have costed out the change more effectively, but that because they couldn't figure it out, they let it go.

Board members had varied opinions about the change to a team structure, expressing some concern about whether it would work, but they also indicated that they had seen positive outcomes. Concern was expressed by one board member, who said, "It was hard for me to really understand how this was going to go, how employees were going to get evaluated and pay raises, that kind of thing." On a more positive note, another member said, "It has allowed them to have a better circle of responsibilities, and it isn't this person handles this little piece" while also observing that lines of authority and how staff report to the next level were confusing for the time being. One board member felt that the change provided staff with

better growth opportunities, and reduced segmentation in service delivery. Staff were viewed as positive about the changes, and as having shifted to a view of themselves as problem solvers.

> *Just like the move to [the Visions program] created some alternate strains, I am sure somewhere there are strains on the team things, but my point is that the team is reacting to them and not having to go to the executive director or the board.*

Board members also identified the development of the Visions program as an opportunity to do something different. "I guess we started out wanting to build a sheltered workshop... and about that time we went through the UT-TIE thing and said, 'Wow, this is a chance to do something better.'" One board member was very positive about the Visions program, but expressed concern that it would strip the good workers out of the main workshop site, leaving the labor force there unable to complete the work.

Two board members mentioned the pace of policy and political change that Emory Valley was working in, but both saw that as something they could do little to affect. "I have a sense at this point that the political process is going faster than we have the ability to influence..."Overall the political changes were seen as problems that would sweep the organization along.

On the whole, board members did not talk about specific goals for Emory Valley beyond the restructuring. The team structure was seen as contributing to a more person centered approach to service delivery. "We were divided into sections too much before, not well coordinated." One board member noted that the board agreed that EVC needed to move people into community employment, but that the workshop would continue to be needed for consumers who required more attention. He also noted that "there are some [consumers] that just don't want to leave." Two board members discussed the need to keep Emory Valley financially stable, and programs such as the Visions workshop were seen as playing important roles in keeping EVC financially stable. One member noted,

> *There's a lot that EVC does that doesn't come under state or federal [funding], ... the board is talking about developing a profit-making enterprise to fund those extra services. This is our priority.*

External Resources

A significant source of support for the change process was Dale Verstegen, a consultant provided by UT-TIE who led the staff retreat in December, 1996. He indicated that his and UT-TIE's goal was to expand the choices available to EVC consumers, rather than to explicitly address closing the organization's facility-based programs. According to Dale, the intent during this phase of change at EVC, as self-managed teams were implemented, was to stabilize the new structure. In the next phase, the organization planned to revisit the strategic plans that had been developed at the beginning of the organizational change project. This strategy was based on the assumption that in order for EVC to enhance choices and service delivery and make fundamental changes in how it operated, the proper structure needed to be set in place to support those changes.

Dale Verstegen noted that the former director of residential services, and the former director of program services, whose jobs were most affected by the organizational change, had been the most supportive of making the self-managed teams happen.

Update: May 1999 Site Visit

Emory Valley Center continued to experience steady but significant change while operating in a rapidly changing state environment. EVC continued to receive some external support from its affiliation with UT-TIE during this period, and UT-TIE facilitated a follow-up retreat that led to modifications to the organizational structure. During the 15 months between site visits, Emory Valley Center achieved three primary benchmarks that reflected gradual but steady change:

- The Daniel Arthur Center, a non-work day program site across the street from the main EVC offices and workshop, was closed. This closure represented an overall reduction in the number of individuals in facility-based non-work programs.
- Over this period, the number of individuals supported in individual community employment increased from 36 to 42, to a total of 19% of the overall caseload of the organization. An additional 20 individuals were seeking jobs with the support of vocational rehabilitation funding.
- EVC implemented a community participation program. This new service has grown rapidly, and supported 39 individuals at the time of the second site visit.

This update will summarize EVC's development in several areas including community employment, the growth in community participation services, and other program changes. It will also review organizational factors including EVC's goals, development of the organizational structure, and external influences.

Community Employment

In addition to the overall growth in community employment, staff indicated that the past 15 months had been a time of rebuilding of relationships with employers. There was a complete change in employment of staff between the two site visits. Staff reported that some employers felt that EVC had not been sufficiently responsive to employer needs in recent years.

Individuals in community employment averaged 19 hours per week in 1999, with a range of 10 to 35 hours. The average wage was $5.45/hour, an increase from $5.08/hour in 1998. Staff also reported that consumers in the workshop and other programs were beginning to ask for jobs, indicating a higher profile for employment in the organization. Employment staff communicated a strong value for good job matches, with the employment specialist noting that "[the team coordinator] is trying to make me do better... slowing me down and saying let's get the right job for them."

While the growth in employment was in individual jobs, EVC staff also indicated a clear goal to develop enclave or other small group opportunities for program participants. The executive director saw enclaves as one way to move toward reducing the size of the workshop, stating,

I would really like to start seeing some significant enclaves develop ... by the time we do that three or four times we are not going to have many people left [in the workshop] and I think the decisions will be a lot easier to make.

While no enclaves were active at the time of the site visit, an enclave for four individuals was scheduled to start at the Garden Plaza Hotel.

Community Participation Services

The most dramatic change during this period was the development and implementation of community participation services. Community participation, a Medicaid-funded service, represented a new emphasis within Tennessee's Department of Mental Retardation. Funding guidelines required that individuals spend at least four hours per day in the community, and that there be no more than three individuals in a group. The coordinator for this service noted its positive impact on consumers: "I feel it is a success because people seem happier, and people have reported that clients enjoy themselves more, they smile more."

Staff acknowledged that they often struggled with identifying quality activities that reflected individual interests. Planning and coordinating schedules for the three-person groups was difficult and time-consuming. Some of the regular activities cited included delivering Meals on Wheels, swimming, taking a dance class, and delivering phone books. The coordinator wanted to expand involvement in volunteer activities.

The role of community participation in expanding employment opportunities was not clear. The program's coordinator noted that vocational exploration was one goal of the service, and cited one individual who had found a job in a small business that he frequented while in the community participation program. Another team leader, though, felt that staff didn't see the big picture yet, and that the focus was still on finding something for three people to do rather than on pursuing larger individual goals. "We still see community participation as okay, let's get three people on the van... Eating with the ducks doesn't give you a job."

Other Changes

In addition to the changes noted above, EVC closed a long-standing kitchen training program that had provided food services for the organization. Staff described the decision to close this program as reflecting a clear focus on the program's performance, stating that it was more effective to train individuals on the job. The board president also noted that the program had not been a financial success for EVC.

EVC staff continued to look for the Visions program to become self-supporting. Approximately 21 individuals worked at Visions for at least some part of the week, with hourly wages ranging from $1.96 per hour to $7.74 per hour. Wages were significantly higher than for workshop employees. The majority of participants earned over $4.00 per hour in March, 1999, with only four employees earning less than $3.00 per hour. Visions did represent a possible conflict with the organization's long-term goals. While consumers were earning better wages, Visions was still primarily a facility-based work program.

Organizational Goals

Staff continued to vary widely in their understanding of the organization's long-term and short-term goals. At the senior administration level, the executive director raised the possibility of closing the workshop at some point in the future as a viable goal. "Frankly, right now we are trying to decide the future of our workshop... we may just pare that thing down a bit." The executive director indicated that new individuals who are entering EVC services did not come into facility-based services.

> *The people who are coming to us from institutions, they are class members so it's easy to get their funding, so we are not bringing any of those people into the [facility-based] day services... they go right into community participation.*

While no specific plan or timeline for closing the workshop existed, some staff noted that it

was not doing an effective job, and may not serve the organization for the long term. There was not universal commitment to this idea, although there was evidence that there had been organizational discussion of the possibility. The president of the board, for example, while expressing skepticism about the prospect of closing the workshop, did indicate that it was a topic of discussion at board meetings. While stating, "I think the board is very supportive of community participation," she also indicated "I think there is a certain part of the population that will always have to have that workshop."

At the time of the site visit individual teams were developing their own mission statements. Staff consistently indicated that EVC maintained a clear focus on the individual. One team leader said, "Emory Valley is the first agency I have worked for where I feel our purpose is the right purpose."

Organizational Structure

A significant part of the change effort was the flattening of the organization and the development of Person Centered Teams that crossed over between the day and residential programs. Over the 15 months between the visits there had been some restructuring of the team model. Following a survey of all EVC staff and a follow-up retreat led by UT-TIE, an organizational decision was made to clearly identify a leader for each Person Centered Team, and to back off from the original emphasis on full self-management. Feedback from staff, both informally and through the survey, indicated that "everybody was asking for a boss."

Despite these changes, EVC continued to have a significantly flatter and simpler structure than it did before the change process began. Administrative staff remained committed to this simpler structure, and to the holistic view of their consumers that was the foundation of the original structural change. The team coordinator emphasized that EVC could not have continued in its old structure, stating, "I have enjoyed the teams because it spread the responsibility, the workload out. We couldn't have survived the way we were." The executive director also stated that moving to self-directed teams was still the eventual goal, noting that "the team leaders are still working towards becoming consultants. They are not happy with being the boss." Compensation for direct support staff remained a concern. Administrative staff acknowledged that they still had not been able to adjust compensation to reflect the increase in responsibilities that had resulted from the new team structure. Team leaders did receive a wage adjustment for their increased responsibilities.

A team dedicated to job development and employment support was developed in recognition of the need for specialized skills and a clear resource focus on community employment. The employment team (Team 6) reflected the concern that employment was being lost in the shuffle of the work of the general teams, and that employer development and relationships required a more focused effort.

External Influences

EVC staff continued to feel buffeted by constantly changing state demands, and felt that responding to these demands made it difficult to set or stay with organizational goals. Many of these changes involved administrative requirements such as changes in record keeping, the implementation of Independent Service Coordination, or increased staff training. The board president expressed frustration with these demands, noting that "my gut was telling me that the state was mandating so much of Emory Valley that the board was basically rubber-stamping what the state told them to do." State level fiscal issues have also limited growth of EVC services in some areas. At the time of the second visit, the state was running a significant deficit. In particular, funds were limited for long-term employment supports and for expanded community participation services.

Funding influenced EVC's ability to diversify its services both positively and negatively. Between site visits EVC expanded its use of VR funding, and has become more effective at establishing employment and community participation funding through DMR. In addition, individuals who received either supported employment or community participation funding through DMR were supported at significantly higher reimbursement rates reflecting, in part, the expansion of Medicaid funding in the state. In 1999, funding for individuals in facility-based services ranged from approximately $5,300 per year to $7,100 per year. In contrast, funding for DMR consumers in supported employment was approximately $15,000 per year, and funding for community participation was approximately $11,000 per year. However, it was unclear how long supported employment funding through DMR could last. DMR offered a follow-along funding rate of $292 per month, but the number of slots available to EVC was capped at 17 at the time of the visit. Overall, EVC staff reported that the ability to expand community-based services was slowed by the lack of slots for these services.

Conclusion

Overall, EVC continued to gradually shift the goals and emphasis of its services, with significantly more individuals in employment and community participation services. Closure of the Daniel Arthur Center and the kitchen program represented, in part, a more critical approach to the role of programs and the extent to which they met the organization's and individual consumer's goals. There seemed to be more significant discussion of the long-term role of the workshop within the organization, although there was not a widespread commitment to eliminating it. Organizationally, there had been a clearer resource commitment to employment supports, and better use of a diverse array of funding sources to met individual needs.

Challenges for EVC centered on maintaining clear and quantifiable goals across the organization. EVC struggled with maintaining focus on its goals in a chaotic state environment, and had to be careful not to let changing state demands influence the goals and values of the organization. Finally, there was a risk that some of the developing services would interfere in the long term with a clear emphasis on employment. Community participation services took a significant amount of creative and organizational energy as they expanded. Similarly, the role and development of the Visions program and enclave-based services risked detracting from a clear focus on individual employment outcomes.

Chapter 3

Ranch Community Services[2]

Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin

February, 1998 (Initial Visit)
March, 1999 (Update)

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Description of the Organization

Ranch Community Services opened in 1964, and was founded by a local TV celebrity. "Farmer Vic," as he was known by his TV persona, established Ranch as a place where people with developmental, physical, and emotional disabilities could engage in meaningful work in the least restrictive environment possible. RCS was developed in the memory of his son, who had a developmental disability. Farmer Vic invested thirty thousand dollars and founded RCS on sixty acres of farmland located on the western edge of Menomonee Falls, twenty minutes from downtown Milwaukee. RCS was established as a not-for-profit organization serving Milwaukee, Waukesha, Washington, and Ozaukee counties.

During earlier decades of RCS's history, program participants worked in the sheltered workshop and the day activities program and were encouraged to get involved in the care of The RCS's considerable animal population. A Ranch administrator recalls that, along with the expected range of ranch and farm animals, the organization at one time boasted exotic animals, including an elephant.

From the inception of RCS, services were based on a medical model and were designed for behavior intervention. Participants at The RCS were, historically, individuals who often exhibited significant behavioral problems. RCS was the organization in the metro Milwaukee area that accepted participants whom other agencies would not or could not work with. "Treatment" was the word used to describe program services and interventions included the use of "time out" rooms.

Before conversion, there were three programs: Community Activities Program (CAP), Treatment Program, and the Work Program. CAP was geared primarily for the individuals who had the most significant disabilities. Some needed assistance walking, in using vans, in bathrooms, or with feeding. The second program was the Treatment Program, which was for individuals whose needs were not as substantial as participants in the CAP program. The Treatment Program included activities in a classroom setting and large group activities in the community. Participants in the Treatment Program also had the option of going to the

workshops and working if they chose. Otherwise, they stayed in the classroom and did school work. The Work Program, third of the predecessors to the current program, essentially consisted of the workshops: one at the main Ranch location in Menomonee Falls and the other in City Center, Milwaukee. Work services were primarily intended for individuals to do piece work jobs on contracts, earn paychecks, and learn work habits. Some individuals did have jobs of their own in the community, jobs that were set up by instructors. However, this was not the focus of the program.

During the mid 1990's, RCS underwent massive changes, beginning with the departure of the long-time executive director, and, with him, a long-running era of stable programming in the medical model using a developmental approach. This change in leadership marked the beginning of the current chief executive officer's (CEO) tenure. The CEO hired the director of consumer services, who in turn sought out the current director of rehabilitation services. These two strong proponents of inclusion and community programming led, and continued to lead, the organizational change movement within Ranch, and provided leadership toward the future vision of an educational/recreational facility for people with and without disabilities.

At the time of the first ICI site visit to Ranch Community Services (RCS), approximately one and a half years had transpired since the beginning of their organizational change process. The organizational structure of Ranch Community Services existed essentially as it had been developed by the change committee, with a few alterations. As it related to employment and day services, the organizational structure included the CEO, who oversaw the director of consumer services, who oversaw the director of rehabilitation services. That director oversaw the team managers, who, in turn, supervised the teams. Approximately 50 staff persons worked in rehabilitation services in 1998.

The director of consumer services also oversaw the residential program, whose director supervised the managers of 9 group homes, who, in turn, supervised the work of home staff. An advocacy manager position existed until December 1997, when it was eliminated for lack of need. At the time of the site visit, the director of rehabilitation services did necessary investigations on behalf of employment and day participants. The director of finance oversaw a staff of three, and there was a two-person marketing and public relations department. The human resources department had a director, an assistant, and a training coordinator. Speech therapy, physical therapy, and occupational therapy were contracted services, although county funds for those services were undergoing dramatic cuts.

The future of Ranch Community Service's organizational structure was rapidly evolving. The commitment to terminating facility-based work involved the closure of one of the two workshops. The second workshop was to be phased out, and ultimately would be marketed as a rental facility to corporate and community groups for events and gatherings. Staff assigned to workshop settings were to be reassigned as that evolution proceeded. Staff in other teams were wrestling with the issue of specialization versus "holistic" job descriptions encompassing the range of services to participants. City Center staff were leading the drive to partial specialization in order to manage their work overload and the competing time and transportation needs associated with individual programming. It remained to be seen whether the organization as a whole would adopt the "partial specialization" model. There was some echo of this arrangement in the "stay back" programming in which team members provided coverage and programming for those individuals not in community activities on a given day. Also in flux was the continuing shift from employment-only and recreation/leisure-only teams to mixed teams that would incorporate some of both programs. How this would ultimately impact the organizational structure had yet to be determined.

Organizational structure would likewise be impacted by the plan to establish new uses for the main Ranch location. The new venture was intended to offer recreation and education

opportunities to the public. Among the offerings envisioned were a retail facility with several stores, a cafe, picnic grounds, and outdoor activities including pony rides, hayrides, horseback riding, sleigh rides, nature trails, and golf. As consumers accepted employment in this new enterprise, staff roles would shift to give support in these new work settings. As previously experienced in the first wave of conversion, the organization will likely undergo dramatic upheaval as the new use of The Ranch property is realized.

History of the Organizational Change Process

During the same period of change in the 1990s, the board of directors underwent extensive turnover, while the organization's financial system and residential program were likewise overhauled. The leap to community employment and the "team" approach to service delivery in rehabilitation services occurred concurrently with many of these other changes. Effects of the period of upheaval in the employment and recreational programs still rippled through the organization at the time of the site visit, although decreasingly so, since staff turnover during the first phase of organizational change had resulted in a staff more sanguine with expansion to community employment.

The executive staff remembered that, with the arrival of the new directors, they began to recognize that people at RCS could be doing more, could be more connected with their communities. The director of rehabilitation services voiced the concern she had had at that time:

> *Why weren't they doing more? Why weren't they hooked up in more individual things? I saw people wandering around, looking bored. I know there had been talk about this even before I started because staff would say 'We've heard this before about doing this change' and 'When is it going to happen?'*

The director of rehabilitation, who had relocated from Texas, suggested bringing in a consultant with whom she had worked previously. With his help, the organization devised a "wonderful strategic plan, saying this is where we are at, this is what we want to do, et cetera, and it was really a neat thing to do". The organization undertook three days of intensive planning under the guidance of the consultant, closing down services for the period of planning.

At that point, a conversion committee was formed. Ranch staff visited two other Wisconsin agencies that had undergone conversion. All staff participated; the executive staff made it a point to make sure that everyone went.

> *They needed to hear it from other staff who were doing it. It wasn't just managers from other agencies saying 'this is how we do it.' They spent that day going out with other staff in the community to see what they were doing and how they were doing it. They got to talk to other staff directly, saying 'how are you guys doing this' or 'what struggles have you come across?' So we learned a lot from them, but we also learned some of the stuff they were doing couldn't apply to us, just because of some of the needs of the individuals.*

The conversion committee split into three different areas: (1) administration and budget; (2) training and attitudes; and (3) family and community. The first task of the committee was to rewrite job descriptions. The organization developed two job descriptions, one for a Team Manager and one for an Employment Community Facilitator (EFC).

Next came the issue of just how the transition to a converted enterprise would take place. The organization decided that, based on the desire of the City Center staff to make the transition, it would be easiest to begin the emphasis on community services at this location. The decision

was bolstered by the fact that City Center had access to transportation and was right in Milwaukee. Those staff who were interested in being managers were required to put that request in writing to Human Resources. Team 1 was formed with a manager and staff.

In the wake of this move, the other staff at City Center said, "what team am I going to be on, when is it going to happen, am I going to be here or there, and what participants am I going to have?" This period of limbo was very confusing to them and, likewise, confusing to the staff at the main location. So the decision was made to speed up the process. Rather than slowly and deliberately transforming to one team after another over a period of months, the entire organization converted at once.

Staff throughout the organization had the opportunity to decide if they wanted to apply for a team manager position and what team they wanted to join. Staff were also given the choice as to which type of team they wanted to be associated with. At the time, it was envisioned that employment teams would include one at City Center, because there was a pre-existing work-shop at that location, and a second employment team at the main location, based on the workshop that existed on site there. The other teams, it was assumed, would be recreation and leisure-focused. While the focus of the teams differed, it was anticipated that whether services were vocational or recreational in nature, the majority of the team activities would occur in the community.

The conversion committee set to the task of sorting out the wishes of staff. Teams were created and team managers chosen. Then, the committee organized the consumers for each team, based on where they lived and on whether they were interested in recreation/leisure or in work. Questions abounded during this period, and until the details were settled, confusion pervaded RCS. Everyone wondered what the future would hold. Although the process threw the entire organization into chaos, fortunately the executive staff had expected this surge of chaos.

As teams were formed, the organization engaged in the hurried process of hooking people up to the community. At the same time, the task of educating parents about the change got underway. A big meeting was called, but was attended only by those families who had traditionally been involved. No further concerted effort was exerted to inform and support families in the transition; executive staff considered this an omission on the part of the organization, and something that they would, in hindsight, do differently. Some members of the board of directors, meanwhile, were forced to field questions and soothe upset families. The board of directors also received a disconcerting letter from an anonymous group of staff members, charging the organization with reneging on its commitment to participants' safety, and urging board members and parents to confront the executive director about the organization's new approach to service delivery. However, the board retained its faith in the executive staff as decision-makers, and refused to be drawn into the dispute.

Participant Perspectives on the Organizational Change Process

Project staff asked Ranch staff to arrange opportunities to interview representatives of each of the major constituency groups who were either involved in or affected by the process of organizational change. Some of these interviews took place in the process of visiting program sites, while others were conducted formally. Project staff were particularly interested in talking to individuals who had a wide variety of perspectives on and opinions about the change process, and the opportunity to sample this range of points of view was specifically requested.

Executive staff

Executive staff were interviewed in pre-scheduled meetings and during travel to and from job

sites. Executive staff included the executive director, director of consumer services and the director of rehabilitation. The executive staff's account of organizational change obstacles and motivations bore a distinctly self-evaluative tone. Staff spoke extensively about organization history and the chronology of events leading to conversion. This history and the process of organizational change are detailed in the History and Organizational Structure sections of this report.

The executive staff saw Ranch Community Services as being unique in some ways, even before the onset of conversion. From the beginning, Ranch was more community-based than other agencies. Due to the suburban location of Ranch Community Services, extensive transportation was required to implement programming. The organization had a van, whereas many of the agencies in the city did not. Also, the organization had historically been considered the "place of last resort" for individuals with difficult behaviors. Finally, Ranch was long identified in a unique way with animals in its part-ranch/part-zoo setting. The presence of animals ultimately became problematic since resources were no longer available to support the care and needs of these animals. Since this was such a significant aspect of the identify of The Ranch, executive staff reported real sorrow at having to remove the last of the animals from the site. The director of community services remembered visiting and caring for the animals as a child, so to be involved in the decision to discontinue these activities was particularly challenging.

Although the organization had been relatively community-based throughout its history, the process of organizational change caused considerable upheaval, not only among staff, but among other stakeholders as well. Staff had led a "comfortable" life under the former executive director. Personnel came and worked on a specific task, knowing where they were going and what they were doing. It was a very structured and predictable environment. When the new executive staff was assembled in the mid-1990s, that comfort and predictability was upended by the organization's change to community-based services.

Recalling the initial stages of the organizational change process, the executive staff explained the decision to start the change process at City Center, where transportation was most accessible. The decision was "to start slowly and go from there." However, confusion and anxiety among staff prompted the executives to quickly rethink their "go slow" approach, and, on short notice, to reorganize all staff into teams. The conversion committee entertained input from all staff, who were invited to name where and with whom they would like to work. Staff choice was honored as completely as possible. Nevertheless, despite the intense effort to satisfy staff requests, the change proved hard on the organization. Executive staff members recalled that the issue was not only that of reassignment to new places and new roles, but that of "splitting up the old mindset" among staff whose jobs had been so comfortable and predictable a short while before. Months of turmoil and staff turnover followed.

It was acknowledged among the executive staff that some staff would leave when the conversion changes got underway. In fact, the option to leave was straightforwardly offered by executive staff at an all-staff meeting during the earliest stages of conversion. Staff were told to "get on the bus or get off," in no uncertain terms, and the board of directors fully supported this approach. After that pivotal moment, the organization had to deal with the consequences of losing good staff who could not "buy into" the new paradigm, suffer through periods of understaffing, and find qualified new staff members who were aligned with the mission of the organization.

The chief difficulty that plagued the executive staff during the first phase of organizational change was communication. When, how, and what to share with families, staff and board were decisions made largely by default, and in retrospect, without sufficient planning.

For example, educating parents about the organizational change was handled only after the change was well underway. Executive staff related that they would have done better to

address the myriad concerns of parents and families earlier.

We identified some of the problem areas, but we didn't do such a good job in working on the things we needed to; one of them was dealing with the families. We didn't know if we should have a big meeting. Actually, we attempted to, and it was the same families who were traditionally involved who came. Then we gave up too quickly, and I think we also decided the individual staffing will work to get the message out. As we have more successes, the word will get around. We pretty much didn't focus on any big effort to educate, and in hindsight, I believe that we probably should have tried harder.

Furthermore, the executive staff worried that the negative feelings of staff, then caught up in the turmoil of conversion, would unduly influence the families. At that time the staff were not fully committed to the process of conversion, and without that commitment the organization would not be able to garner family support.

According to the CEO, the board of directors understood that the organization planned a gradual transition to community programming, even before the plan to convert had been solidified. Two parents sat on the board, and those two saw themselves as progressive and interested. The director of consumer services related that the process of organizational change probably would have been eased if those two parents had been kept better informed, since people were bound to call those board members. In general, the board fielded questions from concerned parents, although its commitment to confidentiality complicated the situation. While the board was apprised in advance of the organization's goal to become much more community oriented, the executive director expressed doubt as to whether the board "truly comprehended this change."

The CEO went on to recount that she, herself, had been hesitant to undertake massive, wholesale organizational change at the time, because there were significant other changes occurring at the organization simultaneously. One was a major change in the information system, another was an overhaul of the finance system, and a third involved changes in residential services. So, as she remembers, a period of six to eight months of "total chaos" ensued. Although the executive director conceded that things were coming together, and that the organization was "going to be much stronger and better," she acknowledged that there might have been a better way to go about the process.

During the exit interview at the end of the site visit, the executive staff reiterated its hope to learn from participation in the study. Executives repeatedly characterized elements of the organizational change process as "struggles," yet acknowledged that those difficulties were fundamental and growth producing to an organization undergoing conversion. As the process of providing services in the community became more stable, the executive staff were looking at the future direction of the organization.

The most prominent future goal envisioned by the executive staff was the reuse of the buildings and space at the main location of Ranch. The renovated barn and the extensive grounds were to include a retail center, including a country store and a pet supply store, as well as antique and craft shops; a cafe with patio seating; picnic grounds with a shelter available; outdoor activities, including pony rides, hay rides, sleigh rides, and horseback riding; a mini-golf course; and nature trails for hiking. An important feature of the new enterprise would be complete accessibility for individuals with mobility and sensory impairments. This future vision built on the established view of Ranch held by much of the general public.

You have people in this community who knew of The Ranch and horses and animals and we really saw it as a positive niche for us to create a business plan to have the

*public and school systems come out, have the elderly come out and do everything in
an accessible manner and in an integrated manner and not make it a place where
people with disabilities were employed. That was never the primary goal. It was a
way to have the public come out here.*

A primary goal which would be fulfilled by the "new venture" would be increased freedom
from dependency on government funding. Cuts and reductions in support were an ongoing
reality to agencies such as Ranch, and financial self-sufficiency was a tremendously desirable
goal. By planning the new venture, Ranch executives were laying the necessary groundwork
for realizing their goal. The director of consumer services described:

*[The Ranch executive director] and I have done a business plan. We got a grant from
the Wisconsin Dept. of Development, $10,000, to pay for some consultants to do
market surveys and things like that that... We are in an area like so many other
suburban areas outside of metropolitan areas; there is so much growth around here,
so we are really very well positioned... 25 minutes from downtown Milwaukee. The
market surveys came back very positive for all these things, so we actually have a
business plan.*

The executive staff explained that Ranch intended to expand its mission to make it
educational in focus. The evolution to an educational component of Ranch, said the executive
staff, would be a natural process, and would develop into a broader mission engaging families
and groups of children-people with and without disabilities.

In this future scenario, this educational/recreational function would be called The Ranch,
versus Ranch Community Services, which, as a separate corporate entity, would continue the
employment and day programming in its current human service capacity. In a sense, the
mission of The Ranch would be to support Ranch Community Services and other endeavors
such as inclusive activities for the community. "It's fair to say that the money raised from this
is largely intended to support the other stuff we are doing about moving people out in the
community." Certain details of the business plan were still being formulated, including the
relationship of these entities to the counties being served, and ownership of the land involved.

One item that was entirely clear, however, was that the executive team members

*Don't want this to be just a place for people with disabilities. We want everyone to
come. The point of the golf course is you just don't have disabled people come, the
whole point is being able to come with your friends and family, so that's how we want
it to come together.*

In addition to providing community and educational resources, the "new venture" was viewed
as offering an alternative work experience for Ranch participants. While this outcome was
considered a "plus," the executive staff was quick to point out that it was not the focus of the
new enterprise:

*When I say that it's not a place for clients to work, that's not entirely true. It will be a
place where some can, who express an interest, but it's not intended to replace a
permanent job; that is not the idea.*

The executives likened this future employment opportunity to the current arrangement for
caring for horses. Both consumers and staff took care of the horses. It operated as a shared
responsibility, with no expectation that participants would undertake animal care as a full-
time job, or with sole responsibility.

The executive staff confided that the new venture was partly a hedge against the possible
consequences of managed care. They explained that, even if managed care came into the life of

The Ranch "with a huge bulldozer," they would still have something to offer people with and without disabilities. A final bargaining chip in the forecasted world of managed care was that The Ranch was a unique entity, and hard to classify.

> *They won't know what to do with us because we don't look like all those others. We are not a workshop and we don't have high functioning people. So there are all kinds of exemptions ...At least we have something to offer families, people with and without disabilities and in some way we will carry on.*

Mid-Level Management Staff

Middle managers in employment/recreation services at Ranch Community Services were team leaders whose role was to lead, develop, train, and support the team staff and oversee service to participants. With their unique and central vantage point, middle managers held strong opinions about the obstacles and motivators to conversion. Similarly, middle managers envisioned improvements that might be made to the current organization, both in terms of day-to-day procedures and in broad policy.

Among the obstacles to organizational change noted by middle managers were: 1) staff resistance and negativity; 2) problems with communications; 3) initial plans that needed to be altered; 4) differing opinions among staff; 5) inadequate resources, including training, staffing and transportation and parent resistance to change. Motivators for organizational change addressed by middle managers included: strong leadership; cooperation from residential services; and staff acceptance of progressive philosophy.

Staff response.

Staff resistance to change was mentioned frequently as a major obstacle to conversion. One manager characterized staff reaction by saying they thought that organizational change was "cracked." Initial staff reaction was that there would be more work and that they would be forced to use their own vehicles. Morale was quite low.

Middle managers characterized the time before organizational change as a "pretty comfortable" place for staff. "They came in and hung around for eight hours and got paid." There were no expectations, no long-range plans, and no goals. There was simply a comfortable environment in which nobody made waves. When organizational change came, many staff fought the imposition of expectations. No more would "hiding" in a classroom be acceptable. Staff would be required to wear four or five different hats, meet with their managers regularly, and interact with many different people.

Staff resistance took various forms. The managers perceived that a core group of people thought that organizational change would just "go away." They assumed that the new administration would get past its desire for change, and things would settle down and go back to "normal." Some undertook a campaign of letters and protest and calls to parents, so that the changes wouldn't go through. Some waged a subtle war of sabotage, registering complaints and putting a negative spin on every issue.

> *I think the staff from the beginning really had an opportunity to have input; instead of input, it was more complaining. Instead of trying to cooperate, it was being an adversary. Or, it was coming up with the most negative thing that could happen. We had regular meetings about why we can't do it, and would try to answer the "what ifs," and it just got awful.*

One thing that helped "bring staff around" to a more positive attitude was the individual staff person having a successful placement. Seeing how a participant was benefiting from

community employment, and knowing that they had a hand in it, proved key to staff "turnaround." Middle managers conceded that there remained pockets of staff resistance and negativity, but that the staff turnover that accompanied the first phase of organizational change largely "weeded out" the negative forces.

Communication.

Middle managers agreed that communication about the organizational change process had sometimes been delayed, leaving staff feeling anxious during the early stages. A manager warned that any organization attempting organizational change should be sure that staff "knew at all times what was going on." However, middle managers pointed out that staff had always been on the organizational change committee, that middle managers had always shared meeting minutes with everyone, and that progress in organizational change was always discussed among the team. In fact, more than one middle manger still wrestled with whether the management had given the staff too much input during the crucial change period.

> *I struggled with this, too...are we listening to them too much; should we just be doing this? I think we were just trying too much. It got to the point where we were almost spoon-feeding them, 'okay, what else do you want that we can do?' So I think we struggled with that, too. Why don't we just do this instead of constantly getting input from them?*

Adjustment of initial plans.

Some original plans that were advanced in the early stages of organizational change proved unsuccessful, and had to be abandoned. One major attempt was the expanded role of the direct service staff. Initially, in the converted environment, all direct staff were going to do job development, as well as job support. About a year into the process, according to a middle manager, it became obvious that this plan was not going to be successful. She speculated that the set of skills one needs to develop, coach and do everything required of this expansive job description was different from the expectations of social workers, who generally fill those positions. A genuine reluctance, born of fear, to "wear all hats," emerged among staff. Although middle managers and others provided extensive training for direct service staff, "it just wasn't happening".

> *I developed an in-house training for everyone in employment. We had different levels of interest and different levels of belief. So we gave everybody in-house a pretty clear sense of how to do an assessment, how to job develop; we brought in another agency to teach job development, as well as I taught and trained. We did job coaching and then presented mini-sessions which were on the DVR {Division of Vocational Rehabilitation process. So that went on for a full year.*

While many staff people were glad that the organization had backed off its commitment to everyone doing the broad range of jobs, some middle managers mourned the passing of this plan. Philosophically, the "all hats" arrangement fit their organizational change view of the world.

> *It really became obvious to us that everybody couldn't wear every hat, and we have a difficulty with that, because I think ultimately we like a flatter organizations, and this was kind of going back to specialization again.*

Another approach that was unsuccessful was the "75% Community Goal." In the early phase of conversion, Ranch adopted a policy intended to facilitate the connection between participants and the community, stipulating that each individual should be connected to her or his community 75% of their day. A middle manager pointed out that it sounded like a great

idea until one had a case load of four or five, and was spending so much time with one person that the others were regularly sitting back at the facility. The organization backed off from his approach, recognizing that the realities of staffing and transportation rendered it unworkable.

Differing staff views.

Although some time and considerable turnover had transpired since the first phase of organizational change and the creation of teams, staff members differed considerably in their assessments of some key variables in service delivery. Prominent among these differing opinions were the divergent views of employability. Middle managers indicated that some staff were "hung up" on declaring certain participants unemployable, while other staff felt that employability was not the staff's decision to make. As one manager said, "...if this person wants to be employed, and their guardian is supporting them, well, go for it!"

There was still some residual discomfort around the issue of transportation and the use of personal vehicles to transport participants. While staff vary in their feelings about the situation, it was fair to note that the issue presented itself quite differently from one team to the next.

Inadequate resources.

Throughout the organization, middle management staff acknowledged the inadequacy of key resources needed to fully effect organizational change to community programming. At City Center, the need for more appropriate space was viewed as central to improved services. A manager at that location summed it up by saying that all staff agreed that the space arrangement wasn't working, and that a group of staff members were very committed to changing the situation to improve it. The group had talked about moving from the site, and was actively looking at a larger and more accommodating space.

A further resource issue at City Center was the ongoing battle for improved rates for services in order to fund more appropriate staff to participant ratios. The needs of more aggressive, higher-need participants sometimes demanded one-to-one programming. The mid-level manager explained that she gained tremendously more information and understanding of a participant when there was a one-to-one staff ratio, than when there are two or three participants per staff. Staff, she noted, had been relentless in their bids for more appropriate funding, and had secured one-to-one funding in some cases, at least for limited periods of months. However, constant staff turnover plagued this team; during one month in 1997 there was a turnover of six staff out of five staff positions. Safety issues and the very intense nature of the job on this particular team constantly challenged the team leader to offset job difficulties with "perks".

> *I will be honest: when I get new staff in here, I'm training and really trying to make it as comfortable, as flexible as possible. If the environment is too rigid, I think they'll walk. So you just try to focus on positive things.*

The problem of understaffing was named as a problem by middle managers from other teams as well. Lack of staff restricted the potential activities of participants and kept all staff burdened by heavy workloads.

Transportation was a major problem that never seemed to be far from the minds of Ranch Community Services staff at all levels. The central issue was that participants' options were limited by transportation-based restrictions.

> *A lot of people are feeling very limited right now, for whatever reasons, the services. It's hard. People who can't take public transportation, for example; they can't have night jobs because we can't transport them. Transportation is my big issue. They just cut back again and we don't need cutbacks.*

The other face of transportation problems was the resistance among staff to use their personal vehicles to transport participants. This issue became a lightning rod for discontent during the initial turmoil of conversion. Middle managers expressed the opinion that feelings about personal transport among direct service staff are really a statement about institutionalization versus community inclusion. Use of personal vehicles seemed a safer and easier thing to address than the belief that all people have a right to life in the community.

> *It was just too much of a coincidence to me that those folks who were saying 'this person can't go into the community' were also those people who were having a heart attack about using their cars. So, as someone came in, it was very clear what was going on. "The car" was easy to say out loud. It wasn't quite as easy to say Joe Schmoe doesn't deserve a life, or can't be controlled around his behaviors.*

Parental resistance.

Middle managers voiced frustration over the reaction of some parents to community employment for their sons and daughters. While their reluctance to let their adult child move into the community proved difficult, especially during the first phase of conversion, a middle manager expressed understanding of that viewpoint since in the past parents were told to keep their children in segregated services so that they would be safe.

A lot of parents were told a very different thing not that terribly long ago, and they had to switch. At the time they were told the first set of things, they were acclimating to 'what is his life going to be... and what's my role in this?'

Still, middle managers held the opinion that they are still dealing with a certain level of resistance from families. Middle managers likened family resistance to staff resistance; in both cases, the idea of changing seemed ludicrous to some:

> *"Why are you changing things? They have come here so many years, everything was fine; they are safe and happy here, so why are you changing things? No, I don't want them out in the community! They can get hurt. A million things could happen."*

Middle managers explained that it was a matter of slowly persuading and educating reluctant parents. Taking them through the process step-by-step gave parents the opportunity to vent their reservations, and to come to understand the value of community inclusion. Certain strategies seemed to work for staff in convincing families to accept community placements. One middle manager explained that she made a conscious effort to start with families who were more comfortable with community employment. Those who were absolutely opposed, she put on the "back burner" for later placement. That allowed time for those who went first to show the resisters some success. This was especially helpful when the sons and daughters of both groups of families - those who accepted community placements and those who resisted-had been in the same program for 20 years.

Middle managers also noted that they called parent meetings in the earlier stages of conversion. They recalled that parents were unlikely to speak up at the meetings, but that their sons and daughters were vocal about what they wanted. The parents, in many instances, were sitting with their children, yet because they had never asked what the individual wanted, they never knew. Parents were surprised and said, "you don't think like that! What do you mean, you want to work? You never said that to anybody! Well, you never asked!"

Middle managers mentioned repeatedly that strong and inspired leadership was a key element to conversion, and continued to fuel the changes the organization was undergoing.

> *One of the things I think is the key to the success of conversion is really inspirational leadership, somebody in place saying out loud "this is the right thing to do." We have*

key people. We have a strong board. And I think it actually came about with [the director of rehabilitation services] on board and knowing things would be different, and [the director of consumer services] being there.

One middle manager admitted that she saw the executive director, board of directors and marketing department as being altogether removed from the functioning of the organization. "I don't think they are in tune with the challenges we face," she remarked. "I don't think they are aware of the struggles on a day-to-day basis." She contrasted this opinion with her glowing assessment of one particular staff leader.

[The director of consumer services] is fabulous. He is one of the most dynamic, fantastic advocates you could ask for. Really a wonderful person. He has his heart so in this job, and in what he does.

The director of consumer services earned heartfelt praise from several middle managers. They saw him as being both dynamic and accessible, and key to Ranch Community Services surviving the first wave of organizational change turmoil.

[The CEO] trusts [the director of consumer services] 100%. A lot of people see [the director of consumer services] as a person who runs the agency, bottom line. He is the director of all the services, he is available, he is successful. And his door is always open. So I think people trusted [the director of consumer services]. He was the leader of the agency and also the left-hand man.

Middle management staff also felt that success in the community, hence conversion, was enhanced by cooperation between employment/day services and residential services. At Ranch, employment/day service staff stated clearly that the residential unit was responsive to the employment needs and goals of participants, unlike many agencies where there were never-ending struggles between the two entities. This cooperative spirit was evidenced at all levels: group home staff and managers, and the management of residential services.

Although not every Ranch staff person could be called "progressive," there existed a considerable momentum for enlightened approaches and risk- taking around new ideas.

I think... everybody realizes now we can be in the community. They are smart enough to know different levels of support, but I think they are also cognizant there's work that there wasn't before. So I don't think there is this old, core feeling that "they don't have the right to be in the community" or "I am going to get hurt." I feel people let go of that.

One middle manager noted that there were still people on separate sides of the organizational change issue, but said that there had been a definite swing toward acceptance of conversion. Although another manager admitted that there remained a "strong nay-saying element," this negative element seemed to be shifting. A manager said, with conviction, that she got "charged about Ranch" because of the philosophy in place there, and the fact that there was movement toward universal acceptance of this progressive philosophy by all staff. She predicted that "soon you will have a staff of people who wholeheartedly believe in what they are doing."

As a final note, middle managers at the Ranch took their intermediary role quite seriously, and functioned, themselves, as catalysts to conversion. Although one middle manager declined to say that she had ever changed anyone, she described her job as "to open up other people's visions of how things can be done." Middle managers saw themselves as part of a team, but with a special mission to enlighten and guide a variety of constituencies.

I think what we're in the midst of is a civil rights movement and I see myself as someone who needs to educate people in the community every day about the wonderful abilities and the wonderful aspects a {person with} a disability can bring into the workplace and into the community.

Direct Service Staff

Members of Ranch direct service staff were interviewed in various settings, both in pre-planned team meetings and at employment sites. All direct service staff spent a majority of time talking about the specific needs and accomplishments of individual participants, and supports that were in place for them. The motivation and commitment that derived from staff's close involvement with participants was evidenced time and again throughout conversations. While it was not the focus of this report, it was noteworthy that the direct service staff who were interviewed expressed considerable delight and creativity in working with participants in the community, and took personal responsibility for the well being of those participants.

Some of the direct service staff interviewed had been employees of Ranch Community Services long before the onset of the organizational change process. They formerly worked mostly in contained classrooms, where one staff person recalled that they had programming that included Activities of Daily Living, pre-work or work class, recreational class and community class. In programming the community class, groups would rotate, so that all participants would have the opportunity to get into the community approximately two days each week. Staff members likened the programming to a high school system, where participants shifted around for each class. This program format existed, according to direct service staff, for quite a long period of Ranch Community Service's history.

While staff were pleased with the outcome of the organizational change process and the current scope of services, the process had involved many challenges. The obstacles discussed by direct service staff often straddled the line between being related specifically to conversion, and to standards for good programming in general. Many of the staff interviewed had joined the organization after the first phase of organizational change was well underway, and had no way to disentangle perceptions of the organization as they knew it from the organization during the organizational change process.

Concerns regarding organizational change process.

Direct service staff noted two areas where they felt management had not been effective in introducing the concept of conversion: the rapid pace of change and the lack of planning. Staff declared that the pace of the organizational change had been too fast. Some attributed this perception only to the "old codgers," while others recalled that they, too, had felt that the speed with which the change was effected had had a negative impact on staff morale and on the program. One month, they remembered, there had been one system in place, and "all of a sudden," the next month, a different system was in place. Staff suggested that the chance to "ease into it" might have been useful. However, one direct staff worker surmised that a speedy change might had been best because "you want to do it, because if you don't do it, you are never going to do it."

Some staff indicated their impression that the organizational change process lacked proper planning. One direct service person described the process as a balancing act between taking bold steps and acknowledging and dealing with real barriers. In several cases, staff explained that what they felt was missing was a solid plan by the executive staff:

> *The biggest fear was that you guys don't know any more than we know, and we don't know where we are going; and there's this fear of where are we going, what are we doing... okay, let's go, but go where? Then, if you say "show me how to get there, it was 'well, I don't know how to show you."*

Their suggested remedy was to do prior research about possible resources in the community, and about the ways that Ranch Community Services and those resources could interact.

One thing I would like to see different was a little more investigation on the agency's part... a little more investigation as to what was in the community, different agencies, or different activities or whatever.

Direct service staff also mentioned the strong resistance offered by some staff members during the first wave of conversion. When teams were first established in February 1996, many staff had the feeling of "fumbling through" and staff reportedly left the organization. The exodus of staff created a difficult period of understaffing. As one relatively new employee stated:

I came in at a tumultuous time, actually, when we were short of staff. We knew where we wanted to go, but we were just really hurting as far as staff and resources.

Staff roles.

Chief among the obstacles to organizational change and appropriate programming, as viewed by direct service staff, was the wide constellation of roles each staff person had been asked to juggle. Each direct service person bore responsibility for job development, job searching, job coaching and all the attendant responsibilities that came with employment programming. In the recreation and leisure groups, staff reported that each person was responsible for case management, instruction, community trips, and transportation. "You name it, we do it," was the guiding principle for direct staff, although the consensus among them was that trying to do too many different things at once undermined their ability to do any job well. " I can't be a case manager, instructor, director; I can't do this and then be good at any at all." Wearing "many hats," and being asked to suddenly adapt to this change in expectations, was most difficult in the early stage of conversion:

I was learning how to be a case manager at the same time I was learning how to be an employment facilitator and it was like "wait a minute, I don't know which way is up" a lot of times. I feel a whole lot better now. But it was very difficult and I know why a lot of people jumped ship.

In response to this difficulty, the organization moved away from its plan for all direct service personnel to play multiple roles. Certain of the teams, notably a team at City Center, had devised an alternative plan, where staff members "specialized" to an extent. For example, one staff person did the bulk of paperwork for the entire staff group; other staff members picked up some of her duties, in order to free that person to do paperwork. There existed differing views among direct service staff about the relative merits of specialization versus the "many hats" approach.

Transportation concerns.

An additional area that was very disturbing to staff during the organizational change was transportation needs. Coupled with the overall lack of transportation resources, the use of personal vehicles was a difficult issue that emerged during the first organizational change phase. During the pre-organizational change history of Ranch, vans transported participants in large groups (of eight or more), where they participated in community activities en masse. With organizational change came the expectation that staff persons would use their own vehicles to transport individual participants to jobs and other activities of their choosing; vans were used only in isolated situations.

With this new transportation policy, turmoil erupted. The use of personal cars for transportation became a touch-point for staff who were dissatisfied with the change in services. While direct service staff agreed that the turmoil over use of personal vehicles had died down, the issue had not been entirely put to rest. Some direct service staff members spoke of the "personal vehicle fiasco" as a vestige of the past; others spoke of the problem in the

present tense, although no one claimed to be personally upset over the circumstances currently; the ongoing problem of use of personal vehicles was regularly attributed to other, nameless staff members.

Transportation was an ongoing challenge for direct service staff. Indeed, they ranked it one of the major obstacles to successful organizational change to community inclusion, and as a primary problem for the organization in general. According to direct service staff, issues with getting participants to and from job and community activity sites hindered good programming on an individual basis, and also impacted the whole group. While staff indicated that they constantly tried to combine resources and destinations, transportation continued to be a worrisome thorn in their collective side. For example, participant activities needed to be compressed into staff's work hours because there was no transportation at night. Other opportunities were limited or complicated by the fact that there was no county-based transportation system in Wakesha County and Washington County, both of which were served by Ranch. Plainly, direct service staff said, "there is no good way to get people here." Staff at the main Ranch location in Menomonee Falls contrasted their transportation plight with the City Center location in Milwaukee, noting that the latter had a bus system that eased transportation woes to some extent. Staff had been creative in trying to resolve these transportation issues and had worked with co-workers at employment sites to arrange car pools.

Staffing levels.

Direct service staff identified understaffing as another major obstacle, both to implementing organizational change and to good programming generally. Individual programming, and the need to spend one-to-one time with participants, impacted the activity of the other members of that person's group. All staff had at least four or five participants in their caseload. While staff acknowledged that these figures appeared to be good ratios, if those four or five individuals were very high needs people, staff would necessarily leave several group members behind while working with one individual. Staff worked creatively to accommodate one another's plans for individual programming; for instance one staff member would stay back at the facility and provide programming for a merged group of those not going into the community on a given day. However, this arrangement limited potential activities, and kept pressure on staff to create larger, less creative group activities than they might have envisioned in better circumstances. Several direct service staff wished aloud for more staff with whom to share the burden.

> *If we could hire more staff! I think that's number one on my list and it's higher than transportation and it's not a reality because of funding. It's always 'do more with less' in human services, but I think the quality of what we do could be vastly improved if we had more people.*

Direct service staff cited resistance to change among the range of stakeholders as an obstacle to conversion. One staff member declared that the "bottom line is most people hate change." The staff person felt that some participants thrived on structure, and enjoyed knowing exactly what they would be doing everyday. She felt that the extra stimulation was difficult for some consumers and they preferred to remain in the facility. Staff explained, however, that this problem usually faded once the participant had experienced some success in the community.

There was similar resistance among parents and families. Many had been involved with Ranch Community Services for a number of years, and considered it a safe haven for their sons and daughters. Some expressed the conviction that they wanted their adult children to continue in the workshop setting, and could not imagine that their son or daughter would ever be in the community. Staff predicted that in a year or two, many of the parents would

"mellow out", and the fears of a great many of them would fade. Staff mentioned other families who had witnessed the "leap" of their family member into community employment and recreation. "As we went through the process together and they saw their children blossom or bloom, they now have really welcomed it with open arms."

Again, success of their family member in the community, or evidence from other parents of their children's successful employment, tended to break down family resistance to change, according to staff.

Direct service staff members noted that a significant barrier to community-based programming was that certain clients have "very challenging behaviors." They felt that these behaviors limited the activities in which they could participate. Staff explained that these problem behaviors took away from what some of the other participants could be receiving, making it difficult for anyone in the group "to have adequate experiences." One staff member detailed the situation:

> *I have a client who is more than aggressive. She likes where she is in the classroom and doesn't want to be out in the community all the time. You offer and she just wants to go for the ride, but when you get there she won't get out of the van or she will try and run back to the van. All these other clients are waiting to do the activity and it's a big disappointment to them if you can't... because this person won't come in. She will get violent. How do you offer community programs when...she doesn't want to go?*

While staff offered no easy solutions to such problems, several of those interviewed concurred that more staff, better transportation arrangements, and "more time" would ameliorate these difficulties.

Positive aspects of conversion.

Despite the challenges they faced, both in the past and present, staff reported being pleased with what they had accomplished and where the organization was headed.

> *For the majority of the participants, it's working. What these clients do now compared to a year ago makes me really proud of the team and proud of the agency, and they are genuinely happier, and their lives are more meaningful because of it. It's not necessarily working right for everyone and it may not. We may have to decide how to service these people better, but I think if the agency wouldn't have taken a free, full stand on it, these people wouldn't be doing the things they are doing.*

As they continued to grow and address these obstacles, direct staff identified strategies that had been successful in expanding community opportunities for individuals. Since the first year of conversion, Ranch Community Services had taken care to hire staff whose vision and values matched its own. This policy increased the likelihood that organizational change would proceed smoothly.

> *They came in as a result of that major turnover, which was a very positive thing, and they all came with enlightened visions and didn't have a lot of the old baggage to deal with as far as what their job used to be... like a lot of staff did.*

Teamwork.

Teamwork was a key variable in the expansion to community employment. Staff expressed their willingness to cover for one another, to think creatively together, and to pool resources whenever possible. For example, one staff member suggested that, when she was looking for a job for one participant, she might see ten other job openings that failed to match exactly what

she was seeking. She hoped to initiate some sort of regular communication with other staff, saying, "I found this great job, but I don't know anyone that needs it... maybe somebody else knows someone."

Success in the community.

Anecdotal evidence of success in the community suggested that success itself was a powerful stimulant to further conversion. Direct service staff witnessed daily success stories as participants eased into community roles and broke away from supports.

> *It's all worth it when you have a participant whom you drop off at an activity, and he's like, "okay, see you later". And he gets upset when you stick around a little bit. It makes it worthwhile.*

Staff told numerous stories about specific participants and their successes on the job - educating employers, convincing parents and family members of the benefits of their working in the community, showing others in the community that they belong there, too, and building their own self esteem. Staff remembered the "old days" when participants were herded into communities, and the glaring impression it must have left on strangers:

> *I certainly don't want to go back to taking ten people out... I have seen other agencies out and about in their travels...you see it and say "my God, did we look like that?" You cringe!*

Organization flexibility.

As part of this bold approach to programming, direct staff felt that Ranch had proven itself flexible and willing to rethink decisions and to remake plans; aside from core values, few things were set in stone. Staff reminisced about the period beginning in February, 1996, when teams were first established. The original plan was to get every participant, on a one-by-one basis, into the community 75% of the time. Though that percentage first seemed like a "magic number" indicating success, reality did not fit the ideal. Staff learned quickly that other strategies, like finding smaller, shorter community connections for several people, worked better for some participants who had lived in institutions or had little previous contact with the community. These participants could not suddenly be expected to spend the overwhelming majority of their time in the community, stretching their independence. Staff confirmed that "it just doesn't work that way." Likewise, the original organizational change plan called for the creation of just one team, followed by the slow turnover of former configurations to teams. Staff noted that the organization was still "tweaking things," trying to capture the best qualities of differing approaches.

In recounting an example of organizational flexibility, staff described a rule that accompanied conversion: "you may take three people or less into the community per staff person." It seemed important to make such a rule because not everybody "was on board with their vision and their heart" in the early stages of conversion. Once the staff had experienced some success, and became more acclimated to organizational change principles, there was no further need for this rule. "Now I don't think it's an issue. It makes sense when they are going out who they are taking and where they are going."

Ranch Community Services staff, both direct service staff and middle management, tended to focus on the present, and reflected limited speculation about the future of the organization. Comments from staff regarding the future were generally framed as ways in which they felt service delivery could be improved, primarily by increasing staff and by improving transportation. One staff person did speculate about the unfolding leadership role of Ranch Community Services, as other agencies watched the evolution of Ranch's programs:

I think they are anxiously awaiting over the years how we progress and the larger agencies are sitting in Milwaukee figuring [that] if we [Ranch Community Services] are successful, which I feel we are on the road to, the county may look at us as the model for individuals... With 400 people in their sheltered shops, they will start having to look at different things. I think there is some trepidation awaiting our results.

Consumers

Most of the consumers had participated in Ranch programs prior to conversion. Generally, they reported greater satisfaction in their current situations, owing to more freedom, better pay, and more interesting tasks in their community jobs, than they had felt in workshop or day programs. Consumers interviewed at their workplaces expressed satisfaction with their jobs in the community. Each of the consumers noted that they enjoyed the content of their jobs. One person explained that she had wanted to work with children, and that her placement in a daycare center pleased her a great deal. Another consumer expressed satisfaction with working in an office environment, because she enjoyed the setting, including the professional atmosphere and her duties. A third consumer said that the variety in her job made it pleasant; a former placement at Wal-Mart had been less to her liking. One participant emphasized good relationships with co-workers, remarking "I like it a lot. Overall it's nice, you know, nice work. Some people here are nice and help me a lot. They are nice and do things for me."

Receiving a paycheck was an important part of employment mentioned by several consumers. Most often mentioned was the fact that wages allowed participants to make purchases that were important to them. Other "perks" were also mentioned as being important to participants, such as inclusion in special events. A consumer recalled the fun of the previous year's Christmas party sponsored by his workplace, and looked forward to the event that year.

While consumers expressed positive feelings about their current jobs, several had had previous placements that were less satisfactory. One woman was fired from a previous position, and retained disappointed, hurt feelings from that experience. Another consumer previously operated a drill press at a training center, and experienced some difficult interactions with co-workers there. Another consumer experienced a mismatch between her propensity to "fix" others' mistakes or sloppiness; this compulsion ran contrary to job expectations. Her current office position was far more suitable, and gave the consumer a safe and productive place to address those behaviors that were incompatible with others' needs in the work setting.

In general, consumers said that they would like to work at their current position for some time to come. One interviewee noted that she hoped to increase her hours on the job; a Ranch staff person, present at the interview, took that information seriously, and promised to explore the possibility of increased hours for that participant.

Several consumers mentioned the key role of Ranch staff in finding them jobs, intervening in job-related problems, and supporting their work lives in general, including help with banking. The interviewees had some mixed reviews of employers, especially of employers' accessibility, but were generally positive about the on-the-job support they were receiving at their places of business.

Family Members

The parent interviewed held a very positive view of Ranch Community Services, based on her daughter's experience over several years. In the early years of her affiliation with Ranch, some of her daughter's behaviors had been extremely problematic. They included throwing and smashing things, screaming, and ripping off and shredding her clothes. Behavior management

constituted the great bulk of her programming. During this earlier period at Ranch Community Services, approximately seven years ago, this parent worried whether the organization would be able to tolerate the behaviors that her daughter presented. She acknowledged that "they put up with a lot," and felt sure that it was only a matter of time before they would "kick her out" of the program. Throughout the difficult early period, Ranch persisted in trying to find the right supports and encouragement for this participant.

Ranch programming included interaction in the community. Early in her Ranch experience, the daughter held a job at a bindery. That job was not a good fit, however, because the participant's obsessive-compulsive urge to organize and straighten the bindery premises did not suit the employer's expectations. Nonetheless, the participant was experiencing community interaction, including not only her job but other regular "community explorations."

About two years ago, the participant experienced a breakthrough. According to her mother, the participant started megavitamin therapy and, at the same time, she had auditory integration therapy at Ranch. Improvement followed these dual interventions. When Ranch staff mentioned that the participant had an interview for a job lined up, the parent recalls that she was "curious," then rather astounded.

> They said, "I think she can do it." They hired her and we just couldn't believe it. I was very excited and apprehensive because, at that time, she still had some behaviors. She was very impulsive and had started on this medication for the obsessive-compulsive behavior. But what happened was having that job was so meaningful for her that she pulled her behaviors together while she was there...We noticed her language, her ability to express herself, to communicate just improved and increased since then... her self-esteem, self-concept. It's a miracle.

Asked about her understanding of the organizational change process, the parent indicated that it caused no disturbance in her daughter's programming, although staff changes did accompany that time frame when the first phase of organizational change was underway. Rather, what made a significant difference was achievement of the goal of conversion: placement in a community setting, where the participant engaged in real and purposeful work." It really has made a difference, this meaningful work. She is smart enough to know busywork from meaningful work, and the concept of getting a paycheck is very powerful."

In terms of the future at Ranch Community Services, this parent simply hoped that the organization would be able to continue to support her daughter as she continued to emerge and take more risks. The mother expressed hope that the organization would have the "luxury of enough staffing to be able to have that kind of support available to her." The mother credited individual staff people with excellent work in motivating and supporting her daughter.

Asked what she would recommend to Ranch Community Services and to other agencies in the process of converting to community-based employment, the parent declared,

> People shouldn't give up hope, even with the most difficult clients. If you could have seen her before. People would have given up. Just... keep trying; it's possible for people to emerge from that handicap. See beyond. She had frustration. "Let me out of here! There's a person in here who wants to be doing something meaningful." She has found a way to express some of her intelligence and creativity, and it's giving her a reason to try harder and take more risks.

Funding Agencies

Funding source representatives included a counselor from the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), as well as representatives from two counties served by Ranch Community Services. In Wisconsin, at the time of the visit, the appropriate county always made the referral to the provider, whether the services were to be VR or county funded. DVR funded up to approximately $4300 per client. Once the $4300 ceiling was reached, the county picked up the individual and provided long-term supports. Participants had to have that long-term support in place before they began receiving DVR services. County funding for supported employment came from one of two sources: contracts for long-term supports, as mentioned above, which may or may not have begun as DVR placements; or Medicaid Waiver funding, which had become available to all participants who met the basic medical requirements, not only to those who had previously been institutionalized.

As Ranch Community Services was undergoing conversion, the Milwaukee County system was in transition as well. In contrast to a system primarily based on slot funding, the county had moved toward person centered planning. While the county admitted to a certain level of chaos surrounding these change periods, overall the concurrent move to community-based programming was viewed by county representatives as a "plus" for organizational change at Ranch Community Services. The county arrangement now allowed an individual to choose Ranch, or a program within Ranch, or to choose another organization; people could take their money and move it around the system. There existed more flexibility and more choice, and county representatives considered this an evolving process toward more and better services for participants. The system was changing from one based on "slots" to one based on necessary supports to meet individual needs. One county representative explained, "While Ranch is doing conversion, we are changing and giving people experiences and opportunities."

All interviewed funding representatives noted that they had a good working relationship with Ranch Community Services, and that they were pleased with the commitment to community placements. In fact, funding representatives saw Ranch Community Services as a leader in community-based employment, and looked to it for examples of catalysts or motivators for organizational change to community programming.

Employer relationships/natural supports.

Representatives noted the determination of Ranch Community Services' staff in contacting employers and educating them about the benefits of hiring individuals who receive support from Ranch. Ranch Community Services had learned that interactions with employers were not one-time events, but required reiterative "check-ins" and trainings in order to keep relationships healthy.

In terms of securing natural supports, the DVR representative concluded that Ranch endeavored effectively to get employers and employees involved with participants and to take a more active role in the participants' work lives. Besides the obvious benefit of facilitating integration into the workplace, natural supports freed up the job coach. However, funding representatives pointed out that cultivating strong natural supports was never an easy task, and that the lack of support created obstacles to full participation in the workplace.

Model for other providers.

Funding representatives looked to Ranch Community Services to engage in training for other providers. In this way, Ranch acted as a "motivator" for conversions beyond its own scope of service delivery. Funders acknowledged that Ranch already offered some employment training, and gave help "among other agencies to make sure things go well," including sharing its experiences on a national level. To support Ranch in training other providers, Milwaukee County hoped to extend additional resources.

While pleased with the progress toward community employment, representatives from the funding sources identified several obstacles in achieving that goal. Challenges experienced by Ranch Community Services, and other agencies like it, included,

- problems of fiscal transition;
- failure to communicate in a timely, complete way;
- pace of change; and
- transportation

Fiscal transition.

During the initial period of conversion, county representatives recalled some fiscal challenges experienced by Ranch. In the process of funding supported employment at a much higher incidence level, Milwaukee County moved dollars from one pot to the next, saying to Ranch Community Services, "In your proposal you asked for supported employment and we funded that." However, Ranch thought that this increased support would be new dollars, and that funding for the day program would be maintained at previous levels. The organization was reportedly surprised when they realized that the supported employment resources would come from a decrease to day program funding. A representative from the county described,

> *When you look at our budget that particular year, we wanted to increase supported employment at the Ranch. We didn't have the dollars to do that, so we looked and took it out of the day program. So that's the basis of discussion-taking it out of there.*

The county funders witnessed the difficulty of striking the fiscal balance between new program initiatives and programming that remains at the facility as an initial obstacle to conversion.

Need for communication.

The new structure and service delivery approach also created some challenges for stakeholders in the process, including case managers and parents. County case managers who had been in the system for a long while before organizational change to community-based programming were entirely comfortable relating to facility-based settings. When the switch to community employment started, it was difficult for some of them to accept the change. Likewise, change was difficult for parents whose adult children had spent years in a facility. With certain families, the fears and resistance persisted.

> *Even when I didn't have a caseload, they would call me saying "what's going on," and they felt like things weren't being explained to them... and they really didn't understand totally what was going on. So I got a lot of calls like that; they were just uncomfortable. Same kind of fears they have now-busing situation, vulnerability in the community, especially with the City Center. Some are still of the old mind, that people in a facility are much better taken care of.*

It was important, according to county representatives, in the preparation process both for the county and for Ranch, that the county representatives understand organizational change from the organization's perspective in order to share that information with families. Funders would thus be empowered to convey the facts and some measure of assurance to families in order to help relieve anxiety. Representatives stated that it was important to share information about the process of organizational change directly with long-term support workers, and to talk about what their needs were in terms of individuals in their case loads. The Milwaukee County representative said that they felt they shared information as best that they could with families and caseworkers. However, they felt that staff were best equipped to tell others, including families and support workers, what the new landscape would look like.

Ranch could also have been part of that discussion with our staff to say, "this is what conversion means, and here's what will happen over time." There were different understandings of what it meant. Perceptions were different because Ranch's philosophy and what this was like was very different from others. So I think probably the communication process could have been improved. No matter how you do it, it's what happens underneath that creates the tension and anxiety.

In the final analysis, funding representatives felt that more and clearer communication prior to organizational change would have garnered "a lot more support and involvement" for Ranch Community Services.

Pace of change.

From the perspective of the county representatives, Ranch Community Services knew exactly what it wanted from the beginning: to get people integrated. While county funders were very much in agreement with Ranch goals and ideals, they wondered if the process would have been smoother if changes had been made at a slower pace.

When we really look at some of the roadblocks and stumbling blocks, maybe we should have just gone step by step to make it a little bit easier... to get everybody up to speed at the same time.

In the beginning, a county representative recalled, "it was a little confusing." Ranch Community Services went from zero people in supported employment to approximately 20 one month later. While a large number of people entered the supported employment program, the placements were not always there; the lack of placements for all participants became an issue. Ranch Community Services examined that problem, and corrected it over time. At the time of the site visit, county representatives estimated that Ranch now had about 30 people in the supported employment program, and that approximately 80% of those participants were placed.

Funding representatives remarked that Ranch Community Services was still undergoing organizational change in some respects, in terms of "converting" stakeholders and evolving its own philosophy.

Transportation.

Another significant obstacle experienced by Ranch Community Services when converting to community-based employment was transportation. While the counties provided some of the needed transportation for those participants who did not use public transportation systems, the county representatives had no clear suggestions for remedying this problem. They noted, however, that the assistance of family members and provider organization staff in transporting participants did help relieve the overburdened, under-funded county system.

Board of Directors

Two members of Ranch Community Service's board of directors were interviewed to obtain their perspective on the organizational change to community services. One individual was a long-standing member of the board, while the second had been introduced to the board during the organizational change process.

Positive changes as the result of conversion.

Board members explained that the entire Ranch community-staff, board, consumers, families and employers-had the opportunity to witness positive changes that have flowed from conversion. These positive experiences were sometimes unobserved or taken for granted, even by board members themselves:

> *But I do, I see loads of pluses coming about and the funny thing about it is you think they are not coming about, and then all of a sudden one day they are right there.*

Over time, these shared experiences of positive connection with the community created a sustainable momentum for continued growth and change. This dynamic energized the organizational change process, not at a single point, but over the course of time.

Board representatives noted strong leadership at the administrative level of Ranch staff. With leadership perceived as capable and dependable came the board of directors' abiding trust in its executive staff. As a board representative described the organizational change process,

> *From the board's perspective I would say this is not an initiative driven by the board at all. It's an initiative that is coming from the staff to the board. They are the ones that are saying, "this is the future, this is the right concept for our organization." They came back to the board and said, "we think this is the way we ought to go," and they came to the board looking for our consent;"... this is how we want to do it, here are the steps, here are the resources we will need, we need you to approve and agree with us on this is the way to go. This particular board at Ranch has enormous confidence in the ability of the staff. They [the board] support the ideas.*

Board representatives also noted that the composition and involvement of the board had changed over the recent past in a way that brought all its members to a common sensibility about the Ranch's mission and goals. This push toward new representation on the board was undertaken to add members who represented resources and opinions of the community. According to a board representative,

> *Now the board has more or less evolved during those years so that it's a totally different board from previously. Now we have almost all new members with the exception frankly of me and another gentleman, so as far as [the members] involvement is concerned I know they are all 100% behind the movement towards the community.*

While the board invested great trust in the proposals made by staff, the board had also gained savvy in its own assessment of the organization through training and exposure to the daily operation.

> *We instituted a practice where one of the expectations of joining the board is that they attend a training session on Ranch operations. View the facilities and read materials. It's not absolutely necessary, but it gives the board some connection. And we have board meetings where there are detailed reports as to what's going on. Very detailed. I am immensely impressed with the organization and management of this group and how much information they do present. They are very aware of what is going on.*

Being increasingly attuned to the goals and struggles of the organization made the board a productive and motivating factor in the ongoing process of conversion. Having been oriented and trained in the philosophy and operation of Ranch Community Services, the board members

> *...not only understand what we are trying to do but also see who they were working with -both staff and the population. So that works out very well, at least from my perspective it does.*

Participant-centered vision.
The interviewed board members concurred that Ranch had developed a profound, shared vision for its delivery of service-one which was strictly participant-centered. For one of the board members, this person-centered philosophy translated to openness about whether a

specific individual should be placed in a community setting or not, based on a very particular set of circumstances and personal attributes. For that board member, community employment

> *...should not be expected wholeheartedly for everyone, because that's not going to be. I am not saying you should divide people and say she is never going to be able to do it, I don't mean it that way. But you should realize maybe what you can do....*

The other board member presented a different view of this participant-centered vision, emphasizing total participation in the community for all Ranch consumers, with varying types and degrees of support. That board member focused on the striking differences that flow from segregation and inclusion:

> *You talk about it in a theoretical sense, but until you actually see somebody moving from a sheltered workshop sorting nuts and bolts to working at Wal-Mart, with friends and associates at Wal-Mart, functioning as part of the community; you can then see the difference between the two. It makes all sorts of sense. You see someone going to a movie in a car from a group home as opposed to putting people in an institutional van and taking them somewhere. There's a big difference.*

Despite differences in interpretation, and perhaps strengthened by those differences, the board of directors nonetheless reflected the powerful influence of a strong guiding vision on the process of conversion.

Obstacles.

Representatives of the Ranch board of directors noted two types of obstacles that presented themselves during the initial stages of organizational change from sheltered workshop and day programming to community-based employment. First, certain mechanics of the organizational change process, including rate of change and communications, were seen as problematic by board spokespeople. Second, there existed pockets of resistance among various stakeholder groups, with some individuals predisposed against organizational change and fearful of change.

Pace of change.

One board member concluded that, while the wholesale shift to community inclusion had been important and worthwhile, the pace of change was too rapid and, therefore, lacked sufficient planning.

> *I think maybe the enthusiasm for the purpose of this whole movement became dominant ...where some of the steps that maybe should have been taken gradually were not, and as a result we encountered some errors. I... perceive that we started out very rapidly... and maybe we should have gone a little slower at the beginning and assessed the participants. There were certainly some who could immediately fit into this participation in the community, and probably always could have if they had the opportunity, and now that they did, that was fine. But that's a certain group. The rest I think probably... should have had a wider range of things that they could have fit into and maybe that should have been planned ahead of time, before this actually started.*

This board member felt that an organization should not try to undertake significant change in one huge leap, or as she characterized it, "okay, today is July 1st, we will do it all by tomorrow." She contended that massive change ought to be taken in well-planned steps, in order to keep the organization "on a normal keel." She expressed understanding of the urge to do it quickly because you so deeply want it to be successful and shared with all.

Communication.

While the other board member did not echo this concern over the pace of change, both board members highlighted communication as a general problem during the initial organizational change phase. The board representatives expressed similar views that there could have been more explanations, in a more timely fashion, " to the people involved, whether it's staff, family, participants, that whole thing." Emphasizing the importance of communication from the executive level of the organization to its several constituencies, one board member detailed the vital content that was missing or underplayed in the Ranch's communications during the early stages of conversion: what is conversion, and why is it better?

Resistance to change.

During the initial phase of organizational change there was some strong resistance. Some participants and family members harbored misgivings about being in the community, and voiced those concerns to the board. One board member observed that family members, guardians and in many cases the participants themselves were unsure about the prospect of organizational change to community work. Because the Ranch had served as their security blanket for many years, the suggestion to move from a sheltered workshop" into society and the real world, like working at Wal-Mart" seemed a very frightening concept. This especially held true for participants who had been here for 10-15 years or more. Both board representatives acknowledged that these fears were understandable, but recognized that those fears must be dealt with gently and proactively.

During the first wave of change, several parents and guardians made phone calls to board members, seeking reassurance about what their son or daughter would actually be doing in the community - would he or she simply be "wandering around", or be involved in some structured programming, they wondered aloud. One board member recalled that she listened and tried to allay their fears, but that she discouraged such phone calls from families. She felt that it was most important that families talk to staff directly.

In a few instances, board members themselves expressed concern about how some individuals would function in the community. Some board members articulated their fears about the vulnerability of certain participants and about their interactions with the population of people without disabilities. Likewise, some board members questioned the potential of some participants to meet the personal challenges awaiting them in the community:

> *I think the primary question that was voiced was concern for the participants as they would go into the community, because so many of the people who come to the Ranch come from institutional settings and have never had an opportunity to be in the mainstream. This would be a whole totally different world for them. Would they really be able to do certain things that were envisioned, or would it be kind of a failure and as a result, would they go backwards emotionally?*

A third group who expressed misgivings about organizational change to the board of directors was the staff. Both board representatives reported that contact between board and direct service staff at the Ranch was, typically, rare. However, during the initial phase of conversion, some contact was made. One of the board representatives observed that, prior to conversion, Ranch staff were accustomed to routinized, facility-based activity:

> *Where people come to the Ranch, do thus and so in the morning and thus and so in the afternoon, and never see beyond that door. As a result, when this came about, I don't think some maybe had the creativity or imagination that could be needed for this [conversion]. As a result I think some may have been a little disenchanted or been afraid to progress into it. Like any sort of new job... it was a big change for a lot of people.*

One board member recalled that, at an emotional point in the organizational change process, a letter was directed from an anonymous group of staff persons to members of the board and to families of participants. The letter warned families that their sons and daughters, who looked to the Ranch for safety and security, could no longer be assured of that comfort. This assessment focused on the fact that staff persons had recently been asked to use their own vehicles to transport participants. The change in transportation policy lit a firestorm of protest, culminating in the aforementioned letter. In that communication, the anonymous authors urged the board and families to contact Ranch Community Services CEO for an explanation and defense of the transportation policy. The gambit to pit the board against the executive staff fell short. The board maintained its trust in Ranch executives, and responded positively to their explanation of the new policy and of the staff's response.

The board representatives recalled that the resistance expressed by staff not only had to do with their individual job roles, nor simply reflected the fear of anything new. Some staff genuinely felt concerned about bringing all the participants into job settings in the community, although they were already bringing participants into the community regularly to movies or other social settings. Jobs in the community offered more permanence, but more demands and expectations as well.

Staff changes.

According to the board representatives, the period of staff unrest diminished as soon as they started to merge into the process of conversion. Some were open to it, and they helped pave the way for change among the whole staff. These more "open" staff members were key, "because...if you are not open to it, you are only going to see the things that are bad and you sure aren't going to see the things that are good." The board representatives expressed confidence that the period of initial resistance to the concept of organizational change was generally past, among all the stakeholder groups.

However, the board member indicated that the staffing dilemma persists beyond the first stage of conversion. That board representative posits that, after the first turmoil of separating those who were "on" and "off" the bus, "the next issue is how qualified is your staff, how well trained is your staff? " Also, given the realities of pay scales for direct service workers, the search for qualified, motivated staff was described as being exceedingly difficult. One board member said,

> *It just kills me when you look at values of society and how difficult it is for us to get good employees here, doing some of the most important work in society.*

The organization needed to balance the intense and immediate need to fill and maintain staff positions against the need to make solid choices to hire only those people whose personal values resonate with Ranch Community Services' mission and goals. This conflict meant that Ranch Community Services could not hold onto valued employees who do not "buy into" the new paradigm and that sometimes it was necessary to leave a position unfilled, though it put stresses on the rest of the staff, rather than to hire someone who made a poor fit with the Ranch. A board member explained the dilemma:

> *We deal with very intensive ratios, and we need to connect people with community, so there's that urge to fill that position at the same time you want to work with a person who really resonates with this place and your values, and what a struggle that must be!*

Staffing problems, acute in the first wave of conversion, persisted as a chronic obstacle to wholesale organizational change in subsequent stages.

The board representatives detailed three areas of future visions as they impact Ranch Community Services:

- funding sources;
- participant-based practices;
- evolving perceptions of the wider community.

Funding sources.

The board representatives recognized the funding pressures impacting human service organizations like Ranch Community Services, especially in light of changing levels of public support. Recognizing the need to broaden its financial base, one board member elucidated Ranch's specific plan for the future:

From our standpoint, we desperately want to create funding sources other than just relying on governmental supports. So what we want to do is to create animal enclosures, a petting zoo, a public venue with all sorts of things to create revenue sources, and to create an employment opportunity for clients, and to draw the public in here so that we are interacting with the public.

According to this board representative, those revenues from the public's participation at Ranch would be used to help offset revenues that were being lost due to cutbacks in government support. In short, Ranch "needs to become more like private enterprise and less dependent on government."

Person centered planning.

The vision for person centered programming had taken a great leap forward since the beginning of the organizational change process. Board representatives suggested that a future vision of Ranch Community Services should be to capitalize on this commitment to the individual, and continue to make that commitment more complete. A board representative expressed recognition that this commitment, while demanding, was essential to Ranch Community Services' future vision. The commitment is,

...to do what is right for the individual, as the client base changes over time and people become more accustomed to client-based services. I think individuals will recognize that it was designed that way. It's going to be more work, but it's right.

Community acceptance.

A board representative predicted that the future would bring better understanding of people with disabilities and fuller inclusion, partly owing to the interactions provided by agencies such as Ranch Community Services:

I think as time goes on, with our population out in the workplace, [individuals] will become more part of everyday life, and as a result of that, I think more opportunities will open up for our population.

Remembering another era, not so very long ago, the board representative continued,

As they would go into a store, I can remember this from years ago, people would turn and look. Well, they don't as much anymore, and I think in the future there will be less and less of that, and people with disabilities will be emerging, as they should be. I definitely see that. So this kind of participation is important for everyone -both sides. I think it will offer opportunities that most people maybe never realized this population could do, and it certainly is proven that they can.

The interviewed board members agreed that the future for Ranch Community Services was filled with both challenges and potential. Likewise, the future for Ranch participants was likely to reflect a stronger and more unified commitment to inclusion, based on the expectations of many stakeholders: the staff and board at agencies like Ranch, employers and people without disabilities, and especially the expectations of participants and their families.

Update: March 1999 Site Visit

In April, 1999, the research team from the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) made a second site visit to Ranch Community Services (RCS). This return trip occurred fifteen months after the first site visit to that organization. Ranch Community Services experienced significant changes directly impacting its employment services during the period between site visits. The organization continued to make progress in moving more individuals, particularly individuals with significant disabilities, into the community. It also continued to struggle with providing some services through the workshop and its City Center location. Many administrative and organizational changes had occurred during the intervening period, and the executive team was committed to empowering staff and working together to achieve the agency's long-term goals. Some of the changes that occurred during this period included:

- The departure of the director of rehabilitation services;
- Increased inclusion of staff in decision making processes;
- Efforts to flatten the administrative structure;
- Changes in service provision; and
- The development of the for-profit entity.

Administrative changes.

The departure of the director of rehabilitation services was a very difficult juncture for the staff of Ranch Community Services. The director of rehabilitation services, who had been brought on staff in 1994 to catalyze and direct the organizational change process, was asked to vacate her position because of difficulties in working with staff and moving the closure of segregated services forward. This staff person was described as working tirelessly to effect change and as being successful in defining the original vision; however, her credibility among staff had eroded over the following years. A primary concern that was expressed was this person's inability to respond flexibly to new challenges. She had a vision of the steps necessary to achieve agency goals, and when there were problems with this approach she began to withdraw and hold rigidly to her vision. She was unable to support staff as they struggled with the process of change. The problems created by her stance and subsequent resignation caused some deep wounds that have remained painful for staff at the time of the second site visit. In hindsight, the executive staff acknowledged that the change effort had been too focused on this one individual, and there was a great openness by all executive staff to support the staff and to ensure that their concerns were heard and addressed.

The leader of the employment team was promoted to become director of rehabilitation services. The new rehabilitation director had earned substantial credibility with the staff through her long affiliation with RCS and her close work with rehabilitation services staff. At the second site visit, several staff did report an improved sense of trust since the change in leadership, although other staff focused on the persistent problems in intra-staff communications that seemed to them no better since the change. In general, however, staff acknowledged an increased responsiveness by the executive team.

Empowerment of staff.

In response to staff concerns about not having adequate support and control over their activities, direct service staff were asked to participate in the decision concerning replacing the team leader who was promoted. The team felt strongly about staying together as a team but was not able to make a suggestion about resolving the issue of team leadership. When the new director of rehabilitation suggested a candidate for the position, direct staff felt that they were being told what to do and expressed some resentment. While executive staff felt they went to considerable lengths to engage direct staff in the process, the direct staff continued to feel excluded.

In order to address staff feelings of impotence, the executive team engaged a consultant to facilitate an empowerment in-service training during the week following the second ICI visit. The concept of "shared power" had already been introduced before that in-service date, and rehabilitation staff held differing opinion about its likely impact. In another attempt to heal divisions among staff, executives introduced diversity training and initiated "switch day," during which staff swapped job responsibilities for several hours in order to experience "walking in another's shoes." Staff were generally positive about these strategies, although some qualified their approval, saying that these attempts were "not enough" or that their focus and intent were "fuzzy." The executive staff expressed hope that these new changes would help resolve some of the previous difficulties and help the organization continue to move forward.

Flattening of Administrative Structure.

Structural changes in the organization continued throughout the period between site visits. RCS became an increasingly flat organization, as team leaders left and were not replaced. Instead, team members, both staff and consumers, were absorbed into existing teams. Some staff noted increasing pressure to do more with less. Executive staff focused on using resources available by not filling team leader positions to add additional direct service staff. As the organization continued to have a stronger emphasis on employment, staff reported their frustration over lack of resources to cover employment support.

Since the original movement toward community employment, there had been multiple shifts in staff job responsibilities. Prior to the original visit, the organization had moved away from the original concept that staff would "wear all hats," doing job development and support as well as community integration activities. Staff were resistant to this idea and it became clear that individuals did not have all the different skills required for those duties. Therefore, staff roles were restructured so that some staff did job development while others were responsible for job support. At the time of the second site visit there was again staff concern about their roles. Prior to her departure, the previous director of rehabilitation had made an absolute declaration that direct staff who were responsible for community integration would never be required to do job coaching. Over time the needs of Ranch changed as more individuals were in community jobs and the director of rehabilitation reversed her mandate. Some staff felt that they had been deceived, and continued to struggle with their role. The employment team, which included many newly hired individuals, recognized the frustrations and confusion felt by other staff, but were eager to continue its focus on supporting people in the community. While some direct staff reported considerable frustration, many staff pointed to the increased program flexibility and adaptability resulting from recent changes and the disposition to accept change.

Service Provision.

During the time between visits, staff reported an influx of more consumers with severe disabilities, including outside referrals of consumers with mental illness. An employment team member with specific responsibilities to these outside referrals was added to staff.

The organization and staff were still struggling with their existing facility services. All workshop activities had ended at the City Center location at the time of the first visit, but Ranch had been unable to find new space to relocate this location's services. They had been looking for a storefront type of location, where individuals could receive some support services when not engaged in community activities. The process of finding this space has been very frustrating for staff. Ranch was prepared to sign a lease at a new location, but it fell through at the last minute. The workshop facility on Ranch Community Service grounds was also a source of frustration. Several individuals continued to receive services at the workshop between the periods that they were in the community. There was very little work available for these individuals, resulting in considerable down time. Staff felt conflicted concerning developing new contracts for the workshop so that individuals would not be bored, and the desire to eliminate the need for the workshop entirely. At the time of the second visit, the team leader responsible for the workshop was looking to develop more contracts.

RCS staff had also focused energy on developing their relationship with its funding source. At the time of the original site visit, there was some concern expressed by county representatives that they had been left out of the loop when the organization began to change toward community employment. At the second visit a county representative credited the new director of rehabilitation with mending gaps in communications between RCS and the county. The county representative explained that these gaps had hampered earlier "buy in" from the county on organizational change issues. Better understanding and clearer communications had since increased the likelihood of smooth relationships with funders, according to the county representative.

New venture.
The first phase of the new community educational/recreational venture that RCS was planning at the time of the first site visit had been actualized at the second visit. A fully accessible mini-golf course was under construction with an anticipated opening date of July 1, 1999. The new venture was developing as a separate corporate entity that would improve the use of Ranch properties as well as allowing resources and income from these activities to help reduce Ranch Community Services' dependence on government funding. Executive staff were excited about the possibilities available through these new efforts; direct service staff were more ambivalent about the benefit of the new activities. Some direct service staff were unclear about the funding for these commercial activities and did not want the venture to take resources away from the human service component.

Conclusion

During the period between the first and second site visit, staff at Ranch remained clear in their goal of community opportunities for all participants; however, they continued to struggle with the clarity of the process to achieve that goal. This strong focus on the goal made it difficult at times for executive staff to see the progress they had achieved, since they were disappointed at not having reached the whole vision. They managed through some very difficult decisions and struggles while continuing to move the whole organization forward.

The events leading up to requesting the resignation of the director of rehabilitation were both organizationally and personally challenging for many of the staff. While acknowledging her contribution, as well as their personal fondness for this individual, executive staff felt they needed to make changes to continue their progress toward the goal. The fallout from these events continued to be with the organization at the time of second site visit, but Ranch staff had worked hard to learn from those issues and work together as a flatter, more cohesive unit.

Executive staff had moved away from the previous practice of grand proclamations of how change would be implemented to more negotiated and shared-power problem solving.

ICI researchers noted that Ranch stood out as exceptional in its heartfelt attempt to create and recreate its rehabilitation program in its best possible form. Ranch was clearly vision-driven and willing to engage in brutally honest self-evaluation and this commitment will serve it well as it continues to work toward its goal.

Chapter 4

Rural Employment Alternatives[3]

Conroy, Iowa

February, 1998 (Initial Visit)
March, 1999 (Update)

Pat Connolly
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Description of the Organization

The two co-executive directors of REA at the time of the site visit shared leadership responsibilities according to their backgrounds and individual areas of expertise across the usual spectrum of executive duties. One of the co-executive directors held responsibility for the outsourcing business, Custom Outsource Services (COS), which had grown from an earlier incarnation as an sheltered workshop. The other co-executive director had principal responsibility for the daily operation of the community-based employment program. Funder relations, personnel, finance, marketing, and other responsibilities were split between the two co-executive directors. Other willing staff members absorbed certain administrative functions. Personnel functions at REA included: service coordinators, job coordinators, one production coordinator, one job developer, an administrative assistant and a secretary. A total of twenty-three staff people worked at REA. The majority of staff were based at the main office in Conroy, IA, two additional job coordinators worked at an office in Iowa City, Iowa.

The job description of a service coordinator at REA encompassed a range of duties, from intake of all new consumers to setting up programming, writing all individual program plans (or at least making assignments for the writing of those plans), overseeing all the program plans, and supervising job coordinators.

Job coordinators bore responsibility for on-the-job support and coordinating all job support elements for consumers they served in the community. At the time of the original site visit, job coordinators had also been asked to absorb responsibility for writing goals and objectives for consumers, along with other administrative duties. For example, one job coordinator put together the skeleton schedule for each week as a general contribution to the organization.

Not only did job coordinators engage in various administrative support functions, they also rotated between their sites, so that consumers were served by up to three different job coordinators on a rotating basis.

What was once the REA workshop now calls itself Custom Outsource Services, an outsource "packaging and mailing business," while focusing on the same processes in which it was engaged as a workshop: mailing, packaging, and small assembly. A production coordinator guided the process of subcontract work in the COS facility. She maintained and developed contacts with business and industry, and found jobs to bring into the organization. Job coordinators manage production on the floor of the workshop, supervising jobs and generally providing support to workers. Some of the job coordinators who worked in the community rotated onto the floor of the facility for part of their week.

At the time of the initial site visit, REA had very recently hired a new job developer. The role of the job developer included the range of activities that create awareness and understanding of integrated employment and the benefits of employing workers with disabilities. The REA job developer had begun to work with employers in the community to identify and to tailor available jobs for consumers. The job developer reported to one of the co-executive directors.

The position of marketing manager, formerly held by one of the current co-executive directors, had not been refilled. Likewise, grantsmanship and development were not formalized into a paid position. Staff members with skill and interest contributed grant-writing efforts on a voluntary basis. The organization offices were served by an administrative assistant and by a secretary.

At the time of the site visit to REA, the co-executive directors had filled those positions for nearly one year. A feeling of stability and growing confidence was evident throughout the organization. However, organization representatives did not talk in terms of "shutting down" the workshop, but about changing the COS operation to some type of business, perhaps mailing and packaging like COS, perhaps not. That yet-to-be-identified business was seen as a potential resource to sustain REA financially, and, at the same time, to offer appropriate work opportunity to consumers, as well as to employees without disabilities. At the time of the site visit a consultant was being engaged to help identify a business operation or idea that would make a good fit with REA, and to help promote that concept with all REA stakeholders. To that extent, the structure of REA remained in flux, with future business possibilities yet to crystallize.

History of the Organizational Change Process

Rural Employment Alternatives started as a school program. Direct service personnel were originally classified as teachers and teachers' aides. Nearly all activities were classroom-based, and adult consumers were referred to as students or as children. The organization was incorporated as a developmental center in 1980, and operated a sheltered workshop. Along with contract work, simulated bench-work, and job readiness training, the workshop offered various community activities, including swimming and bowling.

In 1986, during the early days of integrated employment programming, Iowa CEO, a research and training organization, received a supported employment grant, and began looking for sites at which to develop such programs. REA expressed interest, and was selected as a participant site for the three-year project. Supported employment got underway at REA in 1988. Soon after Iowa CEO and REA began working together on supported employment, REA experienced a turnover of top leadership. The new executive director, a former colleague to key Iowa CEO staff, was tremendously invested in the supported employment movement, and

had done significant work in community-based employment and community-based assessments earlier in the 1980s. REA hired a supported employment coordinator, and Iowa CEO provided ongoing technical assistance. Representatives from Iowa CEO recall that REA was starting from scratch in developing integrated employment:

> *REA had nothing running. We provided some technical assistance on how to do job coaching and worked with them on developing it. That was very successful and we got another grant. CEO provided technical assistance and in the maintenance of the project, we were out once or twice a week, working with the people who had been placed, saying, "How is this going?" We were going out and working with businesses very proactively and asking a lot of questions, like, "Is this working? Is that working?"*

The success of the supported employment project prompted REA to envision total organizational change of its vocational program. REA concluded that it should stop its facility-based program and recreate itself as an entirely community-based operation. The organization planned to offer supports to each individual working in the community. The Iowa CEO awarded REA $25,000 to help affect the change, and offered technical support for the changeover. The Iowa CEO project ended in the mid-1990s, with an incomplete but substantial conversion. Though the majority of REA consumers worked in the community, at the time of the first visit, there remained a facility-based operation, which is described in detail in the Organizational Structure section of this report.

REA also received money directly from the state, beginning in the early 1990s, specifically to provide supported employment. During the first three years of the state grant, REA received approximately $60,000, without any strict accountability measures attached. In the fourth year of the grant, the organization budgeted again for $60,000. However, in that year, the state tightened its accountability regulations, and converted the granting process to an outcome-based system. Instead of the $60,000 on which REA was counting, the organization received only $20,000. This reduction in reimbursement had a large impact on the organization. During the same time period, the state of Iowa initiated a property tax freeze, freezing counties into a fixed budget. As new people came into the MR/DD system, there were no new dollars to support them. As a result, many provider agencies backed off their commitment to supported employment, the more expensive option, and reinvigorated their facility-based operations instead.

At this very explosive point in REA's history, the organization's executive director was avidly preaching total and rapid organizational change to integrated employment, but was failing to fulfill her leadership role. Lack of leadership, coupled with financial turmoil, threatened to completely undermine the organization. The plan for immediate and total organizational change was shelved as the organization fought to maintain solvency.

According to REA executives, a committed staff kept the operation going while the executive director was terminated and the organization dealt with the fallout from that experience. Two staff persons were selected by the board to serve as interim co-executive directors. After a period of stabilization, the interim co-executive directors became the permanent leaders, and began their focus on stabilizing REA's financial situation, implementing community-based programming, and developing a long-term plan for self-sufficiency. While efforts to enhance the supported employment component of programming continued, the notion of completely eliminating the facility-based program gave way to the goal of converting the former workshop into a financially productive work site for persons with and without disabilities.

Participant Perspectives on the Organizational Change Process

Project staff asked REA staff to arrange opportunities to interview representatives of each of the major constituency groups who were either involved in or affected by the process of organizational change. Some of these conversations took place in the process of visiting program sites, while others were formal interviews. Project staff were particularly interested in talking to individuals who had a wide variety of perspectives on and opinions about the change process, and the opportunity to sample this range of points of view was specifically requested.

Co-Executive Directors

The co-directors offered extensive time and insights on the organization's history, structure, and current dynamics and players, as well as its future hopes and intent. Researchers met with the co-executive directors on several occasions, and had informal interviews with each individual during travel to and from job sites.

Original Supported Employment Efforts.

REA's co-executive directors discussed many forces and factors impacting the original and ongoing movement to integrated employment. Certain factors had been in place well in advance of the organization's organizational change to supported employment. Strong leadership from the board of directors had been a hallmark of the organization for years, and REA staff had traditionally given "110%" before and since the changes to supported employment were introduced. The co-executive directors also attributed a measure of REA's successful adaptation to community-based services to the "small town" dynamics of the area, where staff and supporters laid personal claims to health of the organization and the welfare of its consumers.

When supported employment grants became available in the 1980s, Iowa CEO, a nearby research and training organization, urged REA to become involved in the supported employment movement, and REA responded enthusiastically. One director recalled an exciting earlier period in the organization's history, when " there was so much money out there for supported employment, they didn't know what to do with it." Whenever REA applied for a grant, as long as supported employment was involved, it received it. However, that scenario did not last. The executives, in hindsight, think that REA could have been more realistic and should have known that it wouldn't. The co-executive directors acknowledged that the change in funding required them to rethink how people are supported in integrated employment, and in what ways REA might adjust its services to fit fiscal realities.

Even when funding was abundant, certain factors mitigated the early success of integrated employment. As was true with most provider agencies, REA experienced a level of parent resistance to sending their adult children into the community. While this resistance dissipated over the years of successful placements in the community, there remained a residual element of fear and resistance among a very few parents.

Likewise, the early days of organizational change from segregated to integrated employment at REA were marked by "a lot of misconceptions and a lot of hard feelings" among REA staff. According to the co-directors, time and training provided antidotes to the turmoil. Though the period of turmoil ended, the organization was left with a sense of disconnection between the county and Iowa City staffs. Much of this division was physical, resulting from the considerable geographic spread between the two units. Moreover, antagonism grew between workshop staff and other direct service personnel, based on the workshop staff's perception that they were receiving unfair and uneven treatment. The sense of being "second class

citizens" prompted workshop staff to draft a proposal for reform. Measures were taken to equalize treatment and mend some of the division between staff in the workshop (now COS) and those who served as job coordinators in the community. At the time of the site visit, those negative feelings appeared to have been mended. The county and Iowa City staff, however, continued to have limited interaction. Staff responses on a survey conducted shortly before the site visit indicated that gaps in staff communications persisted.

Role of the Board.

The REA board of directors functioned as a more integral part of the organization than was typical of provider agencies. The co-executive directors recognized this, and counted it as a boon to the smooth functioning of the organization and as a catalyst for increased integrated employment. The executives concurred that the board held high expectations for the organization, and pushed them to accomplish their goals quickly, in some cases, more quickly than was possible. Still, the co-directors felt that the push from the board is "appropriate." The board had offered enormous support, according to the co-directors, and, as a group, really wrestled with the problems and dilemmas that faced an organization struggling with financial difficulty. The executives recounted a recent episode, when members of the board disagreed among themselves about the proposed budget:

> *There were a couple of board members saying, 'You can't go on like this. I don't know what you guys are going to do, but something has to change; it has to change right now.'*

In response, the executives developed a budget, based partly on plans for small business, plans that were speculative, based on hopes and best guesses. One board member refused to approve it because there was nothing "in stone that says you can generate those dollars." Other board members countered, saying, that, as a board, they would "have to take a leap of faith, and know that the [REA leadership] were very aware of what's going on financially." The board concluded that, as a body, they would trust the co-executive directors to devise an alternate plan, if the proposed plan fell through. The mix of trust and high expectations from the board seemed to suit and to stimulate the co-executive directors.

Role of Staff.

Along with an unusually committed board, REA staff composition and practices helped maintain the growth and health of the REA employment program. The co-directors felt fortunate to have a strong staff, including the new job developer. They noted that some staff members had been with the organization for many years. The executives cited examples that highlighted the "excellence" of REA job coordinators. The co-directors noted that there was a pervasive sense of shared responsibility among staff; everyone pitched in, without resistance or resentment. Not only were staff competent and interdependent, they were genuinely focused on the welfare of consumers at REA. The co-executives confirmed that this genuine commitment was in evidence at every turn, at every level of the organization.

> *I recently did a survey of employers that work with us in supported employment, and frequent comments were that it was very evident that the coaches put consumers first. They were there to help the consumer be successful, do their job more efficiently, and they were always looking for ways to help them do it better. It's very evident that this agency cares about consumers. That's why we are here.*

The co-directors viewed their collaboration and individuals strengths as contributing to the success of the agency. They felt that they complemented one another well, and were eager to say so:

I don't know how one could have done it without the other. I guess we feel that way about each other. She is fun to work with, and we worked on projects together. When they approached us about [the co-executive directorship], there was a lot to take into consideration. But I haven't regretted it.

The other co-director echoed her sentiments:

In some ways, the agency right now needs people who have the expertise in two areas. And to try and find one person who provides both the expertise and focus in both of those areas is pretty hard.

Consumers put great value on access to staff. In fact, lunch with one or the other REA staff was regularly used as reinforcement for good performance on the job. On a daily basis, the organization ran on an "open door policy." Both co-executive directors remained available to staff and to consumers. They said that if someone was knocking on the door, they always took time to talk with him or her. Both co-directors admitted that this plan introduced problems, like the occasional slip-up when a bit of information was forgotten, or when one lost track of the task at hand when a knock came on the door. In all, however, the two executives agreed that the policy worked, and fit well with the organization's overall philosophy.

Employer Relations.

Employers were mentioned several times by the co-directors as positive forces in the development and sustenance of integrated employment. The executives credited many local employers with a sense of social responsibility that prompted them to cooperate with community-based groups like REA. One co-director noted that this sense of social responsibility might have been heightened among small town employers who feel genuine connection to their constituencies. Likewise, the "small town" effect allowed some employers to extend special understanding about the special needs of consumers:

[One consumer] needed to take off for probably two months last fall when he was ill, and it had a lot to do with his medication. He needed the two months and they held his position for him for when he was able to come back. Some people would say, "we need to replace you", and we didn't have that... they called all the time, wanted to know how he was doing. Again, I think it's a small-town thing, an interdependent thing.

REA consumers in the community were fortunate to have many informed and involved co-workers, according to REA executives. They reported a significant "comfort level" between consumers and their co-workers in many instances. Consumers enjoyed being included in special events and social gatherings at their places of business, and that was often true in the experience of REA consumers. A fortunate outgrowth of good relations with employers was their satisfaction with REA consumers, as workers encouraged employers to find more potential employees through REA.

Small Town Attitudes.

A few other factors converged to facilitate REA's growing success in integrated employment. Chief among them was the effect of the same "small town attitudes" mentioned earlier as it was experienced within organization operations. These attitudes applied to consumers' families and to staff's families as well. People with all sorts of connections to REA made special efforts to contribute time and energy to the organization's success. The co-executive directors reeled off a long list of very involved volunteers among the spouses, siblings, and friends of REA employees. Consumers were known to all staff, and a birth or death in the family of a consumer impacted everyone at the REA.

Support from Funding Sources.

Another key player in the support of integrated employment and of REA generally was the county representative (or Central Point of Coordination, CPC) from Iowa County. This particular CPC had made extraordinary efforts to teach the county board of supervisors about integrated employment and its benefits. She was an indefatigable supporter of REA and its philosophy, and was considered by top management to be a key ingredient in REA's success.

Lack of Recognition in Community.

The commitment of certain key players, such as the funding representative, kept REA's community-based employment program alive. However, REA lacked support for its progressive strategies in two arenas: in the local community and among other provider agencies. In general, the community lacked insight into what REA did, and seemed to resist attempts by REA to educate it.

> *People outside the state, on more of a national level, know a whole lot more of REA and what we are doing, just by virtue of being in the field. In our own community, what's actually happening here is not seen as anything.*

Likewise, the organization lacked cohort organizations with the same agenda. As one of the co-executive directors put it, "we need to find more people doing something like us, [who] are our size."

Expansion of COS.

The co-executive directors felt that the availability of the workshop (COS) continued to be an important option for those few consumers who were unable to participate in integrated employment. That stability and comfort, the co-executive directors pointed out, reduced resistance, thus buoying the overall effectiveness of the integrated employment effort.

Co-directors put considerable stock in the input from a consultant who was helping them to develop a plan for the future based on a small business model. The solvency they sought from this plan would help stabilize the integrated employment effort, and would broaden the potential for more skilled, on-site job opportunities for both REA consumers and people without disabilities.

Even as the directors talk about the upcoming plan for a small business, which was hoped to "save" the organization financially, they recognized that there would be significant upheaval when that level of change was introduced. The executives already predicted that certain staff would leave rather than face another enormous change in REA service delivery. First, however, the REA leadership was challenged to identify and convince a company or other funding source that a small business operation could be lucrative enough to warrant the investment.

Finances.

Financial issues continued to plague REA. Fixed budgets from the counties limited the creativity and individualized programming that the organization was able to offer consumers. Costs, like REA-paid workman's compensation for consumers working in the community, contributed to the organization's financial straits. Grants would be a potentially helpful avenue for greater financial flexibility; however, staff hours were so over-filled that no one had the time to develop these alternative funding sources. While several staff were contributing what time they could to the effort, the co-directors knew that the organization's needs would never be met in this piecemeal fashion; grants needed to be developed in a steady stream, with a specific focus on what the organization sought from a particular funder.

That lack of staff time also impacted the development of the small business, the chief hope for future financial stability at REA. Concentrated investigation of options and resources was needed, but elusive. In a catch-22, the co-executive directors confirmed that understaffing kept financial alternatives from being pursued, while lack of financial alternatives kept the organization understaffed. Finally, the co-executive directors contemplated the future investment in small business with some trepidation. Although the board acknowledged that if this future scenario failed to materialize the executives would change direction and devise an alternate plan, the stakes were relatively high. As one of the co-executive directors put it, "We don't get to make too many mistakes with this; we have to be right."

Staff

Staff from the Conroy, COS, and Iowa City locations met with researchers as a group. They discussed their views on the organization, and specifically addressed their experiences of expansion to integrated employment. In general, direct service staff confirmed a deep commitment to REA that permeated the organization, with staff feeling strong individual ties to the consumers they serve.

Movement Toward Community Employment.

Job coordinators advanced several catalysts to community-based work at REA. Notably, at the inception of integrated employment at REA, Iowa CEO provided substantial help and guidance. One staff person recalled the important and varied kinds of support offered by Iowa CEO:

> We had a grant through the University of Iowa and so they would come out two or three times a week and go to the job sites with us and do data collection, and when there were snags or problems or issues between supervisors and employers, they really helped a lot.

Staff remembered an Iowa CEO representative explaining what would happen, step by step, and assuring staff that it would work, and it did. The process was by no means simple, however. Staff relates the long process of introducing community activities to consumers before moving those consumers into integrated employment. Consumers learned to go into local businesses and make purchases. For example, staff remembered the strain of learning to problem-solve on the spot, and credited Iowa CEO with giving very useful, practical advice for developing that skill.

As REA employment programming moved into the community, staff saw many positive changes in participating consumers. Consumers made substantial and rapid gains in independence and self-esteem. The success of the initial participants prompted interest and resolve from other consumers, and helped to buoy the integrated employment program in its fledgling form.

Challenges to community employment.

While direct service staff found many positive elements in the mix of factors that propelled REA into integrated employment, they likewise noted several negative factors associated with organizational change to integrated employment. In the early days of integrated employment at REA, the tension between workshop staff and job coordinators in the community was pronounced. Staff recollected aspects of the problem:

> There were some hard feelings at that time, because you come in the morning and you work from eight to four, and you worked hard because we had lots of contracts. Then you'd come over to the offices, and see the job coordinators sitting at their

desks, and it was hard. I am the first one to admit it, it was really hard. It was like, 'I would like to have a breather or a break, too.' The pay was even different. We got less in-house than job coordinators got. So they were given job coordinator pay when they were in the community, but when they came back in-house, they were given in-house pay. That really stirred things up.

Disgruntled staff offered a proposal to the executive director, urging that all direct service staff be treated equally. Workshop staff argued that, whether the employee was working in the community or on the work floor, that employee was working equally hard. As a result of that proposal, pay was equalized by 1991.

At the same time, community-based job coordinators had a difficult time defining their role in the organization. Staff recalled that they were confused about how they "fit" into REA, and had some trouble grasping the fact that all direct service staff were coworkers, not just the other five or six job coordinators.

Understandably, these personnel issues, coupled with the geographical split between the county sites and the Iowa City locations, spurred further disconnection and misunderstanding between the city and county "teams" of REA staff. Though the earlier divisions had healed, there remained a significant challenge keeping the two geographically distant segments of the staff in communication with each other. Job coordinators complained that they seldom saw one another, and the "tight knit relationship" that existed in the county location could extend to others whom they saw only infrequently at large group meetings. Staff conceded that the large meetings, held by the co-executive directors every six weeks, were an important tool for keeping all members of the staff in touch with one another.

Increased Paperwork.
Another negatively perceived outgrowth of organizational change was the increase in paperwork that integrated employment had generated. In the not-so-distant past, paperwork was virtually non-existent at REA, and now it consumed a significant portion of the direct service employee's work life.

You never did it before. If you had fading time, and a consumer who was working five hours only needed coaching for four hours, you were told to go shopping or sit at the local restaurant because there was no paperwork. Now, that's all you do, because there are so many of us who rotate. With the three of us, you have to communicate, not only with the job coaches, but [with] the service coordinators. We have to write out our interventions for each individual for the county, plus mileage sheet, time sheet. You also might be starting up a new notebook for someone starting a job. And we have been asked to write individualized service plans and quarterly reports.

Job Rotation.
While staff reported the paperwork attached to job rotation was arduous, the staff's overall assessment of job coordinator rotation was quite positive. Each job coordinator maintained a schedule, rotating job responsibilities for multiple sites, including work at COS during some portion of the week. Job coordinators widely approved of this rotation schedule for a variety of reasons. They indicated that it benefited the consumer because the individual did not become overly attached to one coach, and therefore did not have difficulty if that particular coach was sick or unavailable. Instead, the consumer had the benefit of a "three-person perspective" on her or his performance. Moreover, from the point of view of the job coordinators themselves, the rotation offered them a constant change of venue, which was stimulating and fun.

In a related point, direct service staff generally valued the variety in their jobs. Several job coordinators described the complex scheduling which created the web of support for consumers at REA. The consensus among job coordinators was that complexity of delivering integrated employment supports translated into variety and positive outcomes for staff and consumers. One job coordinator expressed her satisfaction with job variety:

> *I feel this job is great; I like it a lot better [than working in a group home]. I am an Iowa City job coach; occasionally I work on the floor. I love variety, different people to work with.*

Staff support.

Direct service staff at REA credited one another with providing support and development for new or inexperienced staff. Especially during the period when integrated employment was introduced, new staff were trained "on-the-job" and felt nurtured by their coworkers at REA: "I have learned a lot from these guys, because they are really good at teaching. Trying to balance things on the work floor and supported employment is a challenge."

Need for facility based services.

Some staff felt that COS was a more appropriate placement for some consumers than the community, at least at present. Staff wondered aloud about the difficulty of developing natural supports in the community and fading REA supports for consumers with certain challenging behaviors.

We have some consumers who need very intense one-on-one. And I don't think there are businesses who are quite ready for that yet. It's the training process and learning process. It's just learning to accept working with persons who have those challenging behaviors.

Consumers

Consumers were interviewed at job sites, if they were able to take a short break from their job duties, and in a roundtable discussion. At the discussion session, an REA staff member was present in order to clarify context and references made by consumers to the researcher. Consumers had strong opinions about what worked well about integrated employment and what aspects were negative in their views.

Consumers expressed unanimously positive feelings about REA in general, and about the staff in particular. Many of the consumers now employed in the community spoke of REA fondly, as a "home base" and comfort zone. Positive aspects of integrated employment outweighed negative aspects by a considerable margin, according to interviewed consumers.

Positive Aspects of Community Employment.

Among the positive factors noted by consumers was the pride the worker took in being part of a company. One consumer visited in her place of business wore a shirt with her employing company's insignia; she wore another such shirt at the roundtable discussion. Her allegiance seemed obvious, and when asked, she confirmed her strong attachment to the firm. Other consumers specified the "perks" from the companies as positive factors. One consumer shared that she was invited to the Christmas party at work each year, and that the company gave her a beautiful jacket, like the ones received by other staff members at the firm.

More than one customer noted comfort with the company's chain of command as a positive factor on the job. Consumers said that they knew from whom to seek help; support and supervision came from both REA staff and from the staff of the employer. Responding consumers seemed to have a "feel" for which issues should be taken to which support persons.

Consumers admitted that problems did arise on the job; sometimes supervisors demanded that they improve their productivity or quality, and suggested negative consequences or even firing if expectations were not met. Overall, however, consumers said they felt comfortable that those demands existed everywhere in the work world, and that they were willing to meet the necessary standards.

Consumers valued the freedom and access to community they enjoyed as part of the integrated employment experience. One worker noted that the best thing about her job was its location next to a grocery store where she bought and ate lunch. She had befriended many of the staff at the grocery store and she very much enjoys socializing during lunch. One consumer drove his own vehicle to work, and remarked that he liked the sense of freedom and responsibility that the job afforded him.

Consumers spoke at length in the roundtable discussion about their hopes and aspirations associated with work. All had special plans and ideas about saving toward some purchase or planned vacation trip. Hence, getting a paycheck emerged as a very positive element to integrated employment, according to several consumers. One consumer noted that she made more money at her job in the community than she did when she worked at the REA workshop.

Challenging Aspects of Community Employment.
Though consumers were extremely positive in their assessment of integrated employment experiences, they did note certain aspects of the experience they felt were negative. A few consumers recalled negative interactions or misunderstandings with supervisors. Those incidents had different outcomes. In some instances, the worker moved on to a different job; in some, the worker's tasks were changed to create a better fit. In at least one case, the worker was switched to a more compatible supervisor. Also noted in multiple conversations were disagreements between coworkers. Both incidents mentioned were rifts between consumers at REA who worked in common settings in the community. One consumer stated that a misunderstanding with a coworker left her feeling "angry and unhappy, and that her work suffered because of the trouble. Staff acknowledged the problem and resolved it by separating the disagreeing coworkers.

Several consumers mentioned that they missed having time at the REA facility, where they counted many friends among both consumers and staff. More than one consumer expressed frustration with the long ride to and from work, or with related problems about getting picked up by staff or family members in transit to the job; this problem proved especially troublesome when work schedules changed.

Family Members

Parents of REA consumers met with researchers in an early evening meeting to share their perspectives on REA's employment program in general, and on the process of organizational change to community-based employment.

Adjustment to Community Employment
Parents who experienced REA's initial drive to organizational change held differing opinions about that process. One parent clearly noted that she had been "against conversion" in the form it was first presented, but felt equally strongly that "we owe every consumer an opportunity to work to their ability" and to help them to find some way to generate income. Another parent marveled at the growth in her daughter's independence since her move to integrated employment. One parent conceded that it was she, the mother, whose fears about her daughter being "out in the world" and potentially exploited, that stalled the consumer's entry into a community-based job.

Several parents said that their family member did not know about the organizational change process as it was unfolding. The lives of those sons and daughters were gradually impacted by expansion to integrated employment by virtue of their subsequent inclusion in the community. No direct or specific communication regarding the change to integrated employment was shared with these consumers or their families. Though not expressly mentioned by parents, the notion that REA's communication could be improved, both with families and with the wider community, was a recurrent but subtle theme.

It might be added that several of the interviewed consumers graduated from public school systems, and were likely to hold expectations for community employment prior to their association with REA. As an adjunct to that point, one parent noted that "the younger parents didn't have to struggle" through some of the years when services were less available and far less individualized.

Satisfaction with Services.

Parents expressed notable satisfaction with REA, calling the provider "very caring" and correctly focused on the individual. They saw REA staff as committed advocates for their adult children. One parent related an incident where her son expressed strong interest in changing his shift at work. His mother thought it unlikely, and was reluctant to confront her son's boss, but one of the REA co-executive directors intervened, and the consumer's request was granted. Family members agreed that this instance exemplified the individual caring consistent with REA's philosophy. Another parent noted that REA was able to see her daughter's potential in a way that other providers were unable to do.

Job coordinators received many accolades as being excellent supporters whose concern helped ensure consumer success in the community. One parent specified that REA job coordinators communicated exceedingly well with both consumers and with families. One parent applauded the use of a notebook, shared between staff and family, that kept everyone informed and connected. Another praised her son's job coordinator for "allowing him to work out his own problems," yet remaining available to him. The caring staff attitudes were reflected by consumers who longed to stay in touch with friends at REA, both consumers and staff. More than one parent noted the importance to their adult children of maintaining these connections, implying that keeping these connections was difficult when consumers were working in the community all week. Keeping the connection implied a challenge when consumers work in community all week.

Family members named the employer as a component that "really makes a difference" in crafting successful community-based employment.   Coworker training was lauded by more than one parent as being crucial to employer understanding. A parent related that her son's inclusion at the firm's Christmas party was very important to him, highlighting the "perks" that help make work a positive part of life.

Funding Agencies

Representatives from counties served by REA, as well as a representative from the state Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), met with researchers in various face-to-face meetings and via telephone, as the representatives' schedules allowed.

Historical Factors.

One funding representative mentioned the history of REA as being beneficial to its expansion to integrated employment. She noted that REA had not begun as a sheltered workshop, although the sheltered element of the program had existed. In general, she contended, REA moved quickly to integrated employment, and never became bogged down in the belief that

sheltered work was "about all [consumers] can do." As a result, the organization did not suffer the negative effects of sending its most productive workers into integrated employment and struggling to complete workshop contracts with consumers whose productivity was lower. The funding representative reported that providers with deep, long histories of sheltered work often resisted and dragged their feet in the changeover to integrated employment. REA offered no such resistance.

Solid Job Placements.

According to funding representatives, REA's drive to community-based employment was enhanced by the organization's attention to solid placements. Over time, one funding representative declared, the cost-effectiveness of integrated employment increased as workers' tenures on the jobs lengthened and supports could fade. Important to that cost-effectiveness was REA's willingness to wait, assess, select, and nurture good matches between consumers and jobs. More than one funding representative noted that this focus on good placements had continued to be an organizational strength. One explained that REA's matches were driven by the individual, not by the sense that "we need to get these folks out of here and stick them at Hardee's... and then we have a failure."

Good work training and well-planned transitions from high school were boons to increased, successful integrated employment, said one representative. Expansion to integrated employment had been easiest, said funders, among REA's younger consumers and families who came up through the public school system and expected full inclusion.

Parental Resistance.

Among the REA constituency there were, of course, families who resisted the move to integrated employment. Many of their adult children with disabilities had lived at home for many years, and had lived with a considerable amount of protection from the "real world." One REA funding representative thought that parents became convinced of the rightness of integrated employment when they saw that "there is actual, meaningful work being done by the consumers." This representative reported that "parents will say things like 'I didn't know he could do that!' " Families who could never imagine their adult child working at all were stunned to see them engaged in responsible work, side-by-side with people without disabilities.

Need for Facility-Based Work.

A funding representative mentioned the outsourcing business (COS) as filling a need in the whole picture of integrated employment growth. Not only did COS ease the transition to work in the community for consumers, but it could serve the same function for others in the community. The representative indicated that welfare recipients, especially those who had not been in the job market previously, could benefit by using COS to acclimate themselves to the world of work and to develop a beginning work history. Simultaneously, this mix of people with and without disabilities would effect a "reverse integration" at REA.

Flexibility of Funding.

One representative emphasized the fact that the county that she represents had flexibility in funding. This allowed for creativity and innovation in programming for individuals, and accommodated the variety of needs for integrated employment placements. Linked to funder flexibility was REA's ability to effectively manage resources, a point brought out by one representative. She credited the organization with meeting a big challenge in moving from the turmoil of five years before, toward a mix of stability and creativity.

> *I think they are really working at how you maintain the cash flow and what you are*
> *going to do, and measuring the commitments you have already made against many*

> *more commitment that you might make. So I think some of the details are being worked out.*

Positive Assessment of REA.

Funding representatives expressed exceedingly positive attitudes about REA, including and beyond its commitment to integrated employment. Among those kudos was acknowledgment of REA's integrity and credibility:

> *They are honest, ethical and they don't try to sugarcoat something that isn't right. They are not going to say something they aren't going to be willing to come through with.*

Representatives corroborated one another's assessments that, as funders of REA, " we get bang for the buck." They concurred that REA delivered quality service, because the organization not only had a vision, but also stood behind that vision. Multiple representatives assessed REA as focused on certain "bedrock" elements of good integrated programming, including employer education, behavior management, coworker education, and job retention for consumers. Not only was REA notable for its practical skills in service delivery, but also for its "philosophy and attitude," exemplified by its current administration. Funders felt that quality staff were attracted to an agency like REA whose forward-thinking philosophy resonated with their own:

> *Other people with like philosophies and attitudes gravitate to these organizations. Those same people could go someplace else and make a little bit more money, but maybe not have the freedom to be as creative as they are. I think they are real forward thinkers, and it's like looking at the glass as half full... I think that's how they are.*

Finally, more than one representative named good public relations as a positive force in REA's growth and development. REA, while still needing more exposure locally, had made a mark for itself regionally, and even nationally, as a leader in integrated employment. Coworker training also served as a marketing tool among area corporations.

Obstacles to Community Employment.

While the funders gave a very positive assessment of REA's expansion to community employment process, they also mentioned several factors that created "drag" in the movement to more and better integrated employment. Chief among those factors, mentioned by more than one representative, was a lack of understanding about integrated employment among county board supervisors, who ultimately made the decisions about resource distribution across the county. Funding representatives were chagrined that many top county officials remained unaware of and uninterested in learning more about persons with disabilities." Once you introduce a service to a person with a disability, [they feel that] after a while the person shouldn't need the service. They should get all better."

That lack of understanding resulted in gaps in appropriate funding, especially for people with more severe disabilities. According to one funding representative, it seemed ironic that integrated employment was designed to support persons with the most severe disabilities, yet there were not adequate funds available to serve that population.

One funding representative pointed to the turmoil and turnover at the organization during the 1990s as a detriment to its forward progress. She stated that the relationship between funder and REA was much better at that point than it had been even six months prior to the interview. The funding representative remained skeptical about whether REA can maintain all of the people they have in the community and effectively serve the people still working in the

facility. The funder recapped the fact that the current administration took over a big project - one that may prove to be impossible to manage in the way that REA hopes and predicts.

Funding representatives noted some overall needs of the organization. One funder hoped that REA staff would get inservice training on diverse kinds of disabilities, explaining that recent referrals she had made to the organization had not been from among the population REA has traditionally served. Two funders also mentioned that reporting in a timely fashion had not been REA's strong suit, but that that relatively minor failing has been improved recently.

Certain factors outside the control of REA's administration weighed against the successful implementation of integrated employment. One of those issues was the wide geographic area served by REA. The difficulty of finding work close to a consumer's home, and the converse problems of transportation for the consumer and time allotment and travel for the job coordinator, worked against the smooth development of integrated employment in rural Iowa. Another hurdle for REA in maximizing integrated employment was finding and maintaining placements for consumers with the greatest challenges. A funder elaborated on these difficult placements, with people who were non-verbal and limited in physical motion at one end of the spectrum, and others who were quite independent but didn't always cooperate with the agreed-upon plan. Both populations of consumers presented constant challenges to an organization hoping to provide appropriate, long-term community placements.

Finally, a representative suggested that the job of facilitating and maintaining good community placements was hampered by a lack of support systems, recreation groups, drop-in counselors and other services that would address other aspects of people's lives besides employment per se. Though these types of holistic supports existed in some counties in Iowa, they were by no means ubiquitous:

> *I'm not sure there is anything REA can do, but it makes it more difficult... to keep people in employment when there is not an easy way to address the rest of life's issues.*

Employers

Employers were interviewed during job site visits, both in Iowa City and in the towns around Conroy where REA job sites were located. Employers generally expressed very positive feelings about their involvement with integrated employment through REA. They offered anecdotes to illustrate the history and status of integrated employment at their firms, the barriers that had arisen to stall the effort, and the measures taken to overcome them.

Benefits of Community Employment.

More than one employer noted that "success bred success" in initially hiring workers through REA. In the early stages of participation in integrated employment, the company was impressed by the quality and dependability of the work produced, and decided to hire more employees who were REA consumers.

Chief among the catalysts to integrated employment, as assessed by participating employers, was the employers' widely held belief that hiring persons with disabilities is good business. One employer noted that she was "just getting a job done the way she hoped, and consistently and dependably." She went on to say that she did not feel the job could be done as efficiently and as well by anyone else. As a business practice, some employers noted that the top echelon of their organizations encouraged hiring workers with disabilities, although local employers reported an often disappointing lack of genuine support from corporate headquarters for their efforts at sustaining integrated employment.

Coworker training was mentioned as a positive aspect of integrated employment for some

(though not all) of the employers. One employer recalled her participation in marketing coworker training at an earlier stage in the development of integrated employment at REA. She found her role very stimulating, and expressed hope that she could become involved in that process again, partly to reinvigorate her own commitment to integrated employment, and partly to stimulate more energy among other staff who had not been trained, or whose training had occurred some time ago.

Barriers to Employment.

Various barriers dogged the effort to expand integrated employment and to keep it working smoothly. Employers mentioned two facets of consumer-based problems: challenging consumer behaviors on the job; and the necessity of dealing with "messy, uncomfortable problems" that arise with consumers. Challenging behaviors ranged from antagonisms between REA consumers working together to willful disregard of safety measures. One employer related the story of a particularly challenging consumer,

> *...who had a propensity for pulling the fire alarm. There were several documentations of the offense and coworkers described the consequences of his behavior to him multiple times. But one day, he got wind that something was up, and he got the feeling he was going to be fired. So he locked himself in [the employer's] office, and we couldn't get him out. He finally came out and ran and pulled the fire alarm and then held the door for the workers who were leaving the building.*

Employers reported that it was often difficult to confront workers from REA without skirting the issue of concern. Some issues were, by nature, embarrassing such as personal hygiene. One employer expressed her desire to be clear and direct, yet sensitive to the worker receiving the hard message.

Multiple employers related a problem with reactions of staff without disabilities to consumers and/or to the process of integrated employment. One employer characterized the workers with disabilities as "kind of a lightning rod for the angers and resentments of other staff toward [their supervisor]." Related to this problem of antagonism among non-disabled employees was the concern about "backfiring" of coworker training. One employer explained that she was "cautious" about the training program because it seemed to "add fuel to the fire" among non-disabled workers who had a bone to pick with their manager and who use their co-workers with disabilities as scapegoats for their hostility.

Board of Directors

Three members of the REA board of directors, including the current president of the board, met with researchers to discuss the dynamics of integrated employment and the history and future of REA.

Dismissal of Executive Director.

The board recalled the earliest days of integrated employment at REA and the strong leadership from the former executive director, who led the organization into inclusive policies and practices. When that director's tenure ended, another leader was chosen to continue the progress and creative drive to integrated employment. In fact, a rapid, wholesale changeover to fully integrated employment was planned, including the complete shutdown of facility-based work. However, a painful episode in REA's history interrupted that plan. The new executive director of REA was terminated from her position, and the organization was thrown into turmoil. The current board president related the traumatic story of his own involvement and deep sadness concerning this series of events. He and other board members confirmed

that the organization had lagged and stumbled during this period, suffering financial difficulties related to mismanagement coupled with divisions among staff concerning the fate of the executive director. Factions developed, and unpleasant contentions proliferated. As a result, the immediate plans for revolutionizing employment services were curtailed. Energy for improving integrated employment services was usurped by "survival needs" within the organization.

Leadership Under Co-Executive Directors.

Board members noted that the current co-executive directors moved into interim leadership positions and rallied the staff to stabilize and re-energize the organization. The co-executive directors, according to board members, had proven themselves to be trusted and competent leaders who consistently strive to move the organization into fuller community inclusion. The board named progressive executive leaders, who were relatively unafraid of risk, as key ingredients to successful integrated employment.

In general, the board members highlighted the competence and commitment of the whole REA staff as being essential to the organization's recovery from turmoil and its current smooth functioning. They explained the strong community ties and interconnections that had led to fortuitous hirings at REA. One member recounted the story of the hiring of the current REA job developer, whose friendship network and church affiliation connected her with the position opening. The board representatives suggested that the bonds that unite the REA staff owe partly to the "small town" mentality where staff feel a personal commitment to the organization and to the welfare of its consumers.

Future Directions.

Board members mentioned the unresolved future of COS and/or other small business pursuits as a bone of contention and something of a barrier to further progress. Board members held significantly differing views on the future goal and structure of the outsourcing or other business enterprise, and differing opinions about the dependence of executive staff on outside consultants regarding the future of a small business enterprise at REA. Some board members saw the efforts to grow and diversify COS as a vehicle for enhanced interaction with the community, while others saw it as a drain on the drive toward fully integrated work. They noted that the contention about these issues had yet to be completely resolved. Those members who were interviewed seemed to concur that the concept of a small business enterprise benefited the organization both financially and philosophically. In any case, they expressed significant trust in the ability of executive staff to make rational and productive decisions.

Researchers noted the close, everyday connection that this board appeared to have with the organization. Members agreed that there was a higher-than-average level of personal involvement among the board, which they saw as a positive factor in the life of REA.

Non-Work Support Organizations

Researchers met with representatives from local organizations that provide non-work supports to consumers, including Systems Unlimited, Reach for Your Potential, and Iowa CEO. The thrust of their comments about REA centered on communication, because the nature of the interaction between REA and these other support organizations depended upon communication of one sort or another.

Communication Between REA and Non-Work Providers.

Although the non-work support staff representatives lauded REA's current communication with other agencies, one representative recalls that ten years earlier, REA had been demanding

and dictatorial around employment needs, whether or not they coalesced with residential or other support needs. Those interagency relationships were strained, or as one representative phrased it, "to say 'antagonistic' would be too kind a word. There were some real hard feelings. To me, it has gotten so much better over the years."

The non-work support representatives praised the organization for nearly all of its current communication efforts. One representative called interaction with REA "extraordinary," based on the variety of ideas that REA staff generated, and the keen, individualized strategies that REA staff used to communicate with various consumers. Likewise, non-work organization representatives said that "it's a constant brainstorming session" between their organizations and REA, and that the atmosphere of cooperation engendered by this interaction was "something completely commendable at REA." Especially in the delivery of integrated employment, according to these representatives, communication was the first priority between support groups. One residential support person noted that her day wasn't complete unless she has had at least one communication with REA:

> *They have been very good about calling us and saying "what's happened today?" or "you need to be aware of this," or "we don't know what's going to happen when he gets home." We can sit down and talk to a consumer about it. When there is a job that becomes available, they will always call us. We will have a conference with "do you think Joe would be qualified for this?" or "how do you think this will affect him at home?" or "do you think this is too much for him? It's only $3.50 an hour. Would this help his esteem or lower his esteem?"*

Again, non-work staff emphasized that this very useful, collegial type of relationship had only started in the preceding two years or less. Closely related to this open communication with REA was REA's willingness to listen and learn, an adjunct to the close, interactive relationship with other support services.

Person Centered Planning.

According to non-work support organization representatives, person centered planning made the job of meshing supports far easier. Having the individual drive the decision-making process got all support staff involved at the same time and on an equal basis. The effect of this cooperation tended to be smoother and more secure placements in the community. In a related conversation, non-work representatives singled out REA's customer service orientation as a motivator to good programming in general and to quality integrated employment in particular.

Teamwork.

The non-work support agencies' representatives felt that REA's staff worked well together, and were genuinely committed to a common vision. REA tended to suffer less from high turnover than did other, comparable agencies in more urban areas. One non-work support representative argued that in the more rural setting, people were closely tied to their community, and tended to stay in jobs longer, to the benefit of the employing organization. In this close-knit and interdependent atmosphere, according to non-work organization representatives, true teamwork emerged at REA. One staff member could step in for another in an ISP meeting, for instance. The "replacement" person was sure to have done solid preparation, and although they did not know every detail since they weren't the individual's coordinator, they could do a remarkably good job. To others who interacted with them, REA's teamwork was most evident:

> *I think they work very hard on communications, so that the three service coordinators know everybody. They work really hard in terms of having several people know each work site and each person. They rotate through and know employers and coworkers*

and ways of having communication flow back to the service coordinators so everybody is kept on board.

Non-work support service representatives felt that REA's teamwork and commitment served as a model for other organizations, and spilled over to the staff of other agencies that interacted with REA.

Willingness For Risk-Taking.

Representatives pointed to two other attributes of REA as being key to progressive programming. One was the sense that REA staff "all seem to be planners," who wanted to keep a positive view of things and sincerely wanted to make their plans reality. As planners, REA had to face the fact that there was a degree of risk in their plan making. That cued the other positive attribute named by non-work support staff: REA has shown itself to be willing to take risks. Because the organization served so many different customers, some of whom were bureaucrats holding purse strings, it would have become easy to become risk-aversive, echoing those powerful stakeholders who warn against riskier community-based programs, saying:

> *...why are you doing that, when you can run a nice program right there and help all the people with disabilities who like to be together in that program? It's tough to say "well, that's not what really what we are about!"*

A representative of a support organization hoped aloud that REA would continue to manage risk, and not to back away from what they thought was right.

Need for Increased Public Awareness.

Another facet of communication mentioned by non-work support organization staff was community relations. The consensus among the representatives was that REA keeps its light "under a bushel basket", to some extent. Not all support organization representatives agreed that it was a failing on REA's part but all agreed that the community lacked awareness of what REA's mission and program. One representative remarked that REA did a better job of marketing "than anyone else in the state," but that people still fail to grasp the concept of an employment resource that was not a facility. The group suggested that REA might strive to become a bit more high profile in the places where everyone did business. In that way, people could see workers "with and without disabilities working alongside each other."

Need for Facility-Based Services.

Another stumbling block mentioned was the fact that some REA consumers felt strongly that they did not wish to work in the community. At least one of the representatives from the non-work support agencies expressed concern about consumers who had tried integrated work, and had extremely unhappy experiences. The representative recalled one instance where coworkers made a game of trying to get a consumer to talk. They pressured her terribly, and eventually, she retreated into a shell. It was a very stressful situation, and one which she feared reliving. The representative relating this story hoped that there would remain some option for people like this consumer, who chose not to work near many other people.

With its many customers, REA constantly needed to reaffirm its priorities and allegiances. As one representative noted, *"It's tough to be a vocational program and to do a good job because you have so many customers. You have so many bureaucrats telling you what to do."*

While this constant pressure could be viewed as a negative force, REA was viewed by these representatives as mounting the challenge to maintain its integrity and sense of mission. That pressure was particularly weighty when, as in the current situation at REA, financial issues were unavoidable and threatened to dominate.

Needs for the Future.

Finally, the non-work support organization representatives expressed concern that there were few ways to reward good staff, and to assure that they would stay. REA employed many people who not only did their jobs, but contributed a great deal beyond their required job specifications. The worry was how to keep engendering a sense of shared vision and interdependence, so that energy needn't be lost on constant turnover and retraining. Better wages, the group contended, would help, "because good programs that have good staff wages get long-term workers, and can attract and keep the right people."

The representatives from non-work support organizations hoped REA would find a solid, reliable financial base. Such a foundation would allow the organization to hire more staff, and to pay the staff at better rates. The representatives agreed that solid financial footing would ensure more and better opportunities for REA consumers in the community.

The non-work support staff felt that this issue "really goes back to the board." They suggested that the board must understand that without good pay, the organization would not be able to provide good services to consumers and customers. The representatives called for the active involvement of the board in pushing for increased community support.

Update: March 1999 Site Visit

In April, 1999, researchers from the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) returned to Rural Employment Alternatives (REA) in Conroy, Iowa. The initial visit had been conducted fifteen months earlier. With a return visit, the research team sought to explore the dynamics of organizational change over time, as an organization moves through organizational change to community-based employment programming.

In the interim, REA had developed an outcome measurement system and could report information about individuals served by the organization from July1, 1998 to December 31, 1998. A total of sixty-one individuals received services during this period, with 11 people working exclusively for Custom Outsource Services (COS) and the remainder in supported employment. The average wage for individuals in supported employment in December of 1998 was $5.94 per hour, with forty-five employees being paid directly by the employer and the rest by REA through a contract. Eighty-nine percent of the job placements had been maintained for six months or longer, and 44 percent of individuals supported and been on the job at least two years.

In general, REA continued through the fifteen-month period to "shore up" its operation. The co-executive directors, new to their positions during the first visit, appeared more established at the time of the second visit. The residual effects of the tense and tumultuous period when the previous executive director left REA had subsided. During the time between visits, the co-directors had each found their niche and have developed a shared administration that was reassuring to staff and consistent with each director's style.

The fiscal issues created by the previous director were beginning to be resolved, but the organization was still working itself out of a deficit. The anxiety created by those financial issues dictated some of the priorities for the organization, and REA continued to focus on finding a solution that would allow for more stable financing. The concept originally reported in the first visit, and still seen as a goal was to develop a separate business initiative that would provide a consistent stream of income to REA. Staff were still trying to identify the "idea" that would stabilize REA. One of the executive directors had visited other programs to look at affirmative businesses. While gaining new insight through this process, they had become aware that differences in the nature of their community and the organization's infrastructure

would make it difficult to replicate some of these examples. At the point of the second visit, many more staff were envisioning the affirmative business as being an enhanced and further professionalized version of the outsourcing business, with the addition of workers without disabilities and stronger, more consistent contracts. A business venture with this approach would alter the nature of REA's workshop but would not eliminate that service.

The board of directors had continued to be very consistently involved in the running of REA. It appeared that as a result of the fiscal problems created under the previous executive director, the board was maintaining close monitoring of the operation of the program. Board members had strongly emphasized the need for a new source of income and were committed to identifying an affirmative business to address this need. The board had also decreased its emphasis on closing the workshop entirely. The board member interviewed reported that the board was concerned about how quickly the previous executive director had pushed for the closure of the workshop, and that was a factor in the financial problems that arose. This member anticipated that the outsourcing business would always continue in some form and that some consumers of REA services would continue to work in this component.

Despite the financial pressure REA faced, it continued to move forward in its objective of providing community experiences for individuals with disabilities. A consistent program of person centered planning had been introduced shortly before the second visit, and a few consumers were already engaged in the process. Mid-level managers expressed excitement about the new approach and its potential to change lives. Staff also noted an increase in referrals of consumers with more significant disabilities, and had found person centered planning to be helpful in working with these consumers.

Expectations associated with consumers' performance in community jobs had also been raised during the intervening periods. Expectations that consumers comply with work place rules were heightened, and there were some circumstances where individuals were not able to maintain their jobs. While concerned about individuals not being able to maintain their jobs, staff felt that this change in expectations was a positive development. Prior to that point, consumers had not always been held to similar standards as their peers in a community job, and that had sometimes created problems.

At an organizational level, improvements had been made in the job development process used by staff. However, they continued to face challenges in job development because of the rural nature of their community and difficulties in finding jobs that both corresponded to the individuals' interests and were accessible by transportation. Job development at REA was also impacted by the unemployment rate. REA staff informed researchers that the very low unemployment rates in the Conroy area created difficulties in establishing community placements. The staff offered a situational example: an employer had three positions open, and could hire one person to do all three jobs. In current circumstances, the employer was likely to take that opportunity, and to resist the alternative strategy, which was to divide the job into three or more parts, one or more of which might constitute a job for an REA consumer.

Organizationally, REA continued to maintain its job coach rotation system. For each community job site, there were three job coaches who rotate through this site. Staff felt that this rotation system allowed them to stay fresh by not requiring them to spend too much time in any one location. Since three staff worked with each consumer and employer, communication among staff was critical. All of the staff at the main office met every morning to plan for the day. In this meeting, staff shared issues that had come up at the work sites or with consumers. Staff from the Iowa City location typically did not attend these meetings and operated as a more separate satellite. They did attend organizational-wide monthly meetings and social activities.

In the outsourcing program (COS), staff had improved their skills at bidding for contracts. They increased some of their contracts for the outsourcing business, to the extent that they occasionally had to bring in additional people to assist in getting a job out. The COS staff suggested that the greater professionalization of the outsourcing business might indeed be the groundwork for the affirmative business, and could be developed incrementally rather than radically.

An additional area of change at REA involved the organization's interaction with the community. Public relations, particularly through the print media, increased markedly. Similarly, REA geared up its efforts at community outreach in general. Staff had realized that there was limited understanding in the community of the mission and services available through REA. A local electrical company had a similar acronym, and job developers found that employers associated REA's name with that of the electrical service. Staff were continuing to look for ways to increase REA's recognition in the community. During the second site visit, the organization was responding to a church youth group request to direct a special project to the benefit of REA consumers. REA staff were also preparing for a pancake breakfast, sponsored by the local Knights of Columbus, to be held at the organization on the following weekend. The pancake breakfast represented a "first-ever" attempt to invite the community into the facility and to offer first-hand information about REA.

REA had worked through a difficult time, which has included significant financial pressure and changeover in executive staff. It had come out on the other side of some of these problems and continued to move forward to finding community employment opportunities for its consumers. The staff continued to operate as a tightly knit, interdependent network with unqualified commitment to consumers. Programmatic improvement and fine-tuning were evident during the interval between visits, while REA continued to look for alternative funding resources.

Chapter 5

Valley of the Sun School and Habilitation Center[4]

Phoenix, Arizona

February, 1998 (Initial Visit)
March, 1999 (Update)

Pat Connolly
Sheila Fesko

Description of the Organization

A history of the organization was not kept until the beginning of the 1990's, so it is difficult to recreate the dynamics surrounding the evolution of Valley of the Sun's organizational structure. Executive staff noted that by 1990 all programmatic segments of the organization were in place as they existed at the time of the visit, including day services, a school, residential services, and vocational services. The single most evident change in services was in integrated employment, which operated in a very elemental form in 1990, and grew into a thriving enterprise. Though executive staff memories differed as to the number of individuals who were in community placements at the beginning of the 1990s, they agreed that the organization had not yet started "the big push to organizational change from sheltered employment to community."

Vocational Services

By 1990, forty to forty-five people worked in the sheltered workshop at Valley. As the drive to community-based employment got underway in the 1990s, Valley of the Sun encountered a challenging problem: the most able clients were moving to community employment, leaving less seasoned workers to meet contract demands.

We kind of shot ourselves in the foot because changing from the workshop to outside employment, we specialize in enclaves. But we took the best workers [from the workshop] because they were the best qualified, so now we end up with a workshop where we don't have the people to do any sophisticated jobs.

In order to meet contract demands, and because the individuals who were left in the workshop weren't able to do so, the organization brought in laborers without disabilities to fill those contracts. The cost of employing workers without disabilities proved exorbitant, and Valley of the Sun was losing substantial money. A further problem beset the workshop: corporations

began committing to keeping jobs in-house, declining to offer those jobs as contract work for organizations like Valley of the Sun. Says one Valley executive,

> *I thought the NAFTA thing would be against us, but more than that is the large corporations that are no longer downsizing. They will keep jobs in-house rather than give them to Valley or other agencies to do. Instead of getting rid of their people and going through the training process, they would rather keep them busy doing these types of jobs. It's not profitable for them, but in the long run it's probably a good idea. So that has hurt us.*

During the early 1990s, with these several problems converging on the workshop operation, Valley of the Sun "made a big gear switch" in its workshop program: the organization terminated the more sophisticated contracts and brought in less complex jobs. That transition was quite difficult, however, because the workshop experienced considerable downtime. Over time, the workshop acquired a couple of fairly long-term jobs doing labeling and light assembly, tasks that were much less complex than previous contracts. The workshop filled those contract requirements with a greatly reduced, mostly part-time cadre of workers. Most workshop participants spent part of their week in community-based work or in day services.

Concurrent with the major shift in workshop programming in the early 1990s, Valley of the Sun sought to enhance its community-based employment options with a 1992 Arizona Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) grant. Participants in this program were not selected from among workshop employees. Instead, direct referrals were sent from RSA or from Valley's work adjustment program, with the specific mandate to train an individual for a short period and then to send that client out to competitive employment. A lack of training and follow-up, according to executive management staff, resulted in individuals tending to be a poor fit or ill trained for their job placements, and losing those jobs quickly.

It was like, "here's a job and here's a person: GO!" We weren't doing any testing or matching. We didn't do it properly. We didn't do the training correctly; we didn't do the follow-up work.

In 1994, Valley of the Sun received a second RSA grant to place individuals with limited skills in a community setting by establishing enclaves. By 1997, forty-seven individuals were working in Valley-sponsored enclaves in sites around the Phoenix area. At that time Valley partnered with Arizona State University (ASU) to establish a unique training program for more able clients. Individuals were placed at ASU and trained by ASU staff, along with a Valley coach, for direct placement in the community. Training areas at ASU included the mailroom, printing services, copy machine repair, the bindery, and furniture installation. In 1997, five individuals were involved in the ASU training program.

Concurrently, Valley clients were also engaged in individual placements in the greater Phoenix metropolitan area. In 1997, thirty-three individuals were receiving support from Valley while working individually in community settings.

In addition to the on-campus workshop, there were several employment and training opportunities at the Center. The on-campus programs employed clients in the cafeteria, janitorial, and laundry positions. Clients were selected, based on their choices as well as their skills and aptitudes, to work in one of these service areas for a portion of the week.

While vocational programs are the focus of this study, other services offered by Valley of the Sun contributed to the cultural and structural identity of the organization and were linked, by common client populations, to the vocational program. Day services overlapped slightly with vocational services, in that a few individuals participated in both programs on a weekly basis. Some vocational clients came had previously participated in the school program, and many of

Valley's vocational clients were also residential clients. Thus, the constellation of Valley of the Sun services were all connected to the vocational program.

Day Services.
Valley's Day Treatment for Adults (DTA) was designed to enhance individuals' skills for living in the community, and to refine their personal and social skills. Day services included both community-integrated and non-integrated programming. Each client was assessed and assigned to either the integrated or non-integrated setting. Along with personal care and living skills, integrated DTA programming included job awareness and readiness activities.

Residential Services.
At the time of the visit, Valley of the Sun operated twenty-two group homes and two apartment settings. The large residential program included a medical needs unit (MASH) and ongoing staff training. The Valley of the Sun, through its residential program also offered social, leisure, and recreational activities to enhance the at-home living experience of residential clients.

Educational Services.
Since its founding, Valley of the Sun had provided education to children and youth with developmental disabilities. There were two classrooms at the time of the visit, serving students from age six to twenty-two. Students could be Valley residential clients, or could come to Valley via the Phoenix public school districts, if a determination was made that Valley offered the "least restrictive environment" possible for a given student.

Other Facets of the Organization's Structure

In addition to the programs mentioned previously in this section, other components of Valley of the Sun included the Foundation, the Auxiliary, and Property Management/HUD. The Foundation had been established for purposes of fundraising during the period of bankruptcy, and continued to function in that capacity. The Auxiliary was a minor fundraising unit that offered general support to the organization. One function of the Auxiliary was the running of a thrift shop. Through its Property Management agent, Valley owned and operated a total of 16 group homes at the time of the site visit, including HUD contracts.

History of the Organizational Change Process

In 1947, Mrs. Bernice Kussell fulfilled a very personal mission by opening her Phoenix home to infants and children with disabilities. Kussell created a program specializing in children with mental retardation, offering both care and learning opportunities. Though she initiated the program without funding in place, Kussell eventually developed a funding base for a school. That school was incorporated in 1950 as a private, not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization under the name *Bernice Kussell's Opportunity School for Handicapped Children.*

During the next year, the fledgling organization experienced substantial turmoil. Financial difficulty set Mrs. Kussell in opposition to the organization's treasurer, who called for Kussell's resignation and rallied staff and board members to oust the founder. Instead, it was the treasurer whose resignation was accepted, and Mrs. Kussell stayed on at the helm. At that point, the decision was made by the board to completely revamp the organization, even to the extent of renaming the school. In the spring of 1951, the school was reorganized and renamed The Valley of the Sun School for Handicapped Children. Thus, the current Valley of the Sun School and Habilitation Center recognizes several anniversaries of its inception.

Over the ensuing decades, Valley of the Sun grew into an organization serving individuals with developmental disabilities in residential, day services, and vocational programs, as well as its educational program.

In 1989, Valley of the Sun acquired another organization, Garden Park, and incorporated its services into the overall service provision. Garden Park, which was located at the current site of Valley of the Sun, was an organization plagued by its own financial woes. The "takeover," however, was not received well by much of the Garden Park constituency.

> *We were perceived by many of the Garden Park people not as the saviors but as the bad guys coming in. We had to eliminate staff, merging the two. We were perceived as the evil empire coming in to take over their beloved program, and many of the parents were very angry.*

The major difference between the two agencies was that a huge element of parent involvement existed at Garden Park that did not exist at Valley of the Sun. The problems were compounded when promises made to parents and staff at Garden Park did not come to fruition.

Shortly after acquiring Garden Park, Valley of the Sun suffered from the convergence of heightened expectations, insufficient funding and management problems. Management problems included constant crises with no planning. In the words of one current executive, "It just got out of control, poor management. It was not run as a business, it was run as a social agency."

In 1990, Valley of the Sun was forced to file for protection under Chapter 11 of the Bankruptcy Act. Executive staff members who were interviewed attributed the bankruptcy to the organization growing too fast, and to general mismanagement. Rapid growth was due to the new Medicaid Title 19 funding through the state. All providers, including Valley of the Sun, were offered more money than was actually available, and were enticed to expand services, often unrealistically. Executives acknowledged that it had been a time of real change in terms of funding configuration and the presumptions concerning how funding could and should be used. "The state had you; you had to do certain things; you had to have group homes and everything."

The current executive director remembered that, when he was first affiliated with Valley of the Sun as a volunteer, the management staff made up a sheet of bank accounts and how much money was in each.

> *I thought they were saying "here's a balance, subtract!" No! They were calling up the bank and giving the numbers, so the bank said, "well, there was $50,000 this morning"… So they would write a check for $50,000, not taking into consideration what [was] coming in or going out. In one year, they had $15,000 in arrears. They were out of control.*

As part of the bankruptcy process, Valley of the Sun was forced to reorganize its entire operation from top to bottom. In 1994, Valley emerged with a renewed organization.

This renewed organization included a vocational program that featured a sheltered workshop, work adjustment training, and job placement. In 1994, concurrent with agency-wide reorganization, Valley of the Sun received a grant to place individuals in a community setting by establishing off-campus enclave programs. By June 1997, forty-seven individuals were working in this enclave program, at sites including the Valley of the Sun Thrift Shop. On-campus work programs included the workshop, food service, janitorial and laundry training, as detailed in the "Description of the Organization" section of this report.

While the active, well-established vocational program in evidence at Valley could not have been envisioned by the organization's founder, Mrs. Kussell did forecast contemporary attitudes about inclusion in the community when she noted, "Why should the taxpayers have to support these children [sic] in a colony all their lives, when with help and guidance, many can support themselves?" She went on to predict that, "Whether [the individual] succeeds or fails will to a great extent depend on this community's acceptance of him [or her]."

Participant Perspectives on the Organizational Change Process

Project staff asked Valley of the Sun staff to arrange opportunities to interview representatives of each of the major constituency groups who were either involved in or affected by the process of organizational change. Some of these interviews took place in the process of visiting program sites, while others represented formal occasions. Project staff particularly wanted to speak with individuals who held a wide variety of perspectives on and opinions about the change process, and the opportunity to sample this range of points of view was specifically requested

Executive Staff.

The executive management team, consisting of the president/CEO, the director of vocational services, the director of residential services, the director of day services and the chief financial officer, were interviewed during early morning meetings on both days of the site visit. The Director of Vocational Services was also interviewed during travel to and from job sites.

The executive team saw Valley's vocational services as being in a continuing process of "conversion" from a workshop modality to a community-based model. That change had been crystallizing since the upheaval of a merger and a bankruptcy thrust the organization into the 1990s, and since the availability of RSA grants to form enclaves dramatically altered the landscape of service delivery in vocational services beginning in 1994.

Valley's executive team identified several factors that had contributed in a positive way to the development of integrated employment options at their organization. Among those positive forces were: availability of RSA funds to create enclaves; a new testing system and subsequent good job matches; a two-tiered system of job coaching; and the capacity for improved lobbying at state level.

Availability of RSA Funds.

The executive team agreed that the turning point in the direction of vocational programming from facility-based to overwhelmingly community-based was the availability of the Rehabilitation Services Administration grant money to support enclaves beginning in 1994. At that time, Valley of the Sun was already involved in some individual supported employment; however, the 1994 grant allowed the organization to shift its financial resources in vocational services to community-based programming. The executive team recalled that, philosophically, and "without having a major discussion about it, [we] were all pretty much on the same wavelength in terms of where the program would go." Quite simply, the trigger for change was having the money to change the mode of service delivery. With that grant came the capacity to hire additional staff, including job coaches, and to purchase more vehicles, all toward the goal of making enclaves the centerpiece of vocational programming. The executive team considered this opportunity the primary initial catalyst for change.

Testing System.

Executive team members reported that they had brought in a new testing system which enhanced their capacity to make favorable matches between individuals and jobs, and had, in

turn, smoothed the process of moving to integrated employment. The workshop program manager and supervisor were both trained to do this testing. Valley had also begun to do independent testing for people who were transitioning from school to work. The executive team expressed satisfaction that client strengths and weaknesses, previously identified by staff without empirical support, could now be reliably quantified.

Job Coaching.

Executive team members also took pride in their two-tiered system of job coach development. When an employee began work at Valley of the Sun as an inexperienced job coach, that person was called an employment specialist associate and paid on an hourly basis. Unless a new employee has substantial experience in job coaching, he or she was required to participate in a three-semester training program, taught by a faculty member of a local community college. With a move to the second tier, the employee became a salaried employment specialist with a raise in pay. The executive team attributed considerable stability and solid job coaching performance to this training arrangement. Thus, training had positively impacted the move to integrated employment at Valley of the Sun.

Improved Lobbying.

While Valley's executives saw state funding practices as thwarting the development of innovative employment strategies in Arizona, one aspect had improved: a new association for providers. The woman heading the association was an experienced lobbyist, whose earlier work with members of both the House and Senate gave her close contacts with members of both those state bodies. It remained to be seen how much impact she and the association would have on state funding for employment for persons with disabilities.

The executive team also noted some increased pressure on legislators from the state Rehabilitation Services Administration. In the opinion of the executive team, RSA appeared to be getting "more aggressive, like the [state] Division of Developmental Disabilities had been in the past, getting a little bit more savvy."

The Valley of the Sun executive team noted several obstacles to the hoped-for goal of more complete community inclusion. These obstacles included: parent and staff resistance, lack of foresight in planning change, community misperceptions of Valley of the Sun, and state funding.

Parent Resistance.

Chief among the obstacles to community employment, as noted by the executive team, was parent and family resistance to having a consumer work in the community. An executive team member said,

> *A lot of parents don't want their kids to be successful. They don't want them out of the sheltered workshop, and outside in the community, because it scares them. Now, what they think [their adult children] are going to do when they die, I have no idea.*

The executive team characterized the parent resistance as fear "that something bad is going to happen" to their son or daughter, even though parents knew that there would be a staff person there all the time, and despite the fact that transportation was provided. Members of the executive team felt that some parents saw the world as an evil environment, one from which their adult children must be protected.

To allay fears, Valley staff met with parents during annual staffings, in one-on-one situations, in order to explain the program and how it would impact their son or daughter. In that setting, parents could ask questions without fear of looking foolish in a large group. In one

case, the staff brought in a "formerly resistant lady to talk to a currently resistant one." However, according to the executive team, that plan had failed.   While some parents had become convinced of the merits of community programming for their children, a "core group" of resistant parents remained. Asked what further plans they had for turning those parents around, the executive team admitted to having no ideas for other interventions.

Staff Resistance.
Organizational changes such as the merger of the school and Garden Park, as well as the change to community employment, created issues of staff resistance and negativity. That negativity surfaced when hepatitis B screenings, always required by Valley of the Sun, were fought by the Garden Park constituency as the merger occurred. The then-executive director of Valley of the Sun backed off from the long-held screening policy in order to placate Garden Park, and, according to Valley executive team members, "basically made us look like fools because we were the ones requiring it." Staff did not appreciate the awkward position in which they had been placed. Further, although staff from both agencies had been told "not to worry" about their jobs as the merger took place, the merger made it necessary to let many people go, and a great many hard feelings developed. Some segments of the Garden Park team never felt like they were part of the new organization. At nearly the same moment, the financial crisis was mounting and bankruptcy was upon them.

As Valley's executive team recalled, "it was time to make a real change." Among the changes that flowed from that pivotal point were changes in vocational services. From the early stages of change to community employment on a large scale, a degree of staff resistance and anxiety accompanied the change process. This was partly rooted in the Garden Park experience, and dovetailed with the fear of the changes proposed in vocational service delivery.

The executive team recalled that, as the change to community employment was developing, they encouraged the front line staff in the workshop to leave the positions that they held, and to move into job coach training at the community college. The executive team let workshop staff know that, " This is our trend, so jump on the bandwagon. This is a great opportunity for you. There was a lot of resistance at first."

At the time of the site visit in early 1998, staff negativity and resistance had been largely eradicated, according to the executive team, though "there have been rocks along the way."

Lack of Foresight in Planning.
The third obstacle to fulfillment of Valley's goal of community employment was embedded in the change process itself. As executives remember, the initial push to move people from workshop to community work in enclaves felt easier than they had anticipated.

> *But we were placing the cream of the crop, the people who were most easily placed. We brought in a new testing program and did some careful matching and we were really excited about the new things we were doing. We were putting people in jobs they were well suited for and really wanted to do, and we were all pumped during the initial phase. I would say the first year and a half were real exciting, and then we started to realize that the next group of folks were going to be harder. We knew that, but we weren't focusing on it because we were having so much fun doing what we were doing.*

The next group of individuals in line for placement proved much more difficult to organize into small groups with similar desires and skills. Thus, the placement process slowed down considerably. Also during this period, the original enclave, the first placement for the first group of individuals funded under the 1994 grant, began to experience problems. Ultimately, a

mutual decision was made by the employer and Valley to terminate the enclave. Some of the individuals from that enclave had still not been placed in a new situation at the time of the site visit. In all, foresight in planning placements for all clients was compromised in the heady rush to make easy and exciting placements for the first group out the door.

A related obstacle facing the organizational change process at the time of the site visit was the matching of individuals still in the workshop with jobs in the community. While these clients "really want jobs in the community," the organization was struggling about how to effect that transition. The individuals remaining in the workshop were viewed by Valley staff as having skill levels below the standard necessary for job placement. Executive team members admitted that the converse of the problem was the need to develop jobs appropriate to the individuals seeking work in the community. At the time of the site visit, discussion was underway with a commercial laundry, where basic jobs suitable for many in the workshop could be developed.

Community Misperceptions.

An ongoing struggle for Valley was its attempt to establish a coherent public identity for itself. Though the executive team did not connect this problem directly with the development of community employment, they did acknowledge that, based on its historical roots, Valley was widely perceived as only a school. Its other functions were not generally known or understood by the public. This had some de facto impact on job development and on community support, as vocational services strived to become more firmly linked with the community.

State Funding.

Executive team members identified state funding as a major obstacle to the development of integrated employment in Arizona, and for Valley of the Sun in particular. First, the executives noted that state legislators failed to understand the funding process that sustained MR/DD providers. Compounding this problem is misleading information that RSA had given to the legislature about the nature of employment programs. Providers like Valley must rely heavily on RSA. Executives recounted attending a state hearing shortly before the site visit, where it became evident that the legislator speaking about supported employment had no understanding of that type of programming.

> *We went to the hearing and they let no one speak, and one legislator said "we'll table this until next session; that's so silly- we would never let anybody be in rehab just a month or two." He didn't even understand. He was thinking about medical rehab or something. I don't know what his thought process was, but he had no clue what he was talking about. And these are the people making decisions that affect our funding.*

Not only was the state legislature poorly equipped to make decisions about MR/DD employment funding, but also the Arizona Division of Developmental Disabilities had ceased to be involved in employment programming at all after 1993. At that time, a government study analyzed how the Arizona state government might be streamlined. The study concluded that it was inefficient to have two divisions funding and operating similar services. Its recommendation was to funnel all the employment money for people with disabilities into Vocational Services, and to allow that department to "run the whole show." At the time of the site visit, Valley saw itself as being caught in the middle of the battle between state agencies.

> *They are both lying to each other, the Division of Developmental Disabilities and RSA are lying back and forth. We haven't received anything. Everything is at a stalemate and nothing gets accomplished. Now they are back together again trying to negotiate certain things, but the harm is done. What happened is that people who*

*were on the transfer list, those individuals who were in the system and on the rolls
have a lifetime guarantee of supported employment, because of promises made at that
time...anybody else coming new into the system has about a five-year wait. One of
these people has to not need support any longer, or leave the state, or die to make a
slot for those people waiting who weren't so fortunate. So it's really been bad.*

Employment Staff

Valley of the Sun staff who were interviewed in the course of the site visit included
employment specialists, employment specialist associates, a job developer, a program manager,
and a workshop supervisor. These staff members were interviewed during a luncheon
meeting, at various job sites, and en route to job sites. Staff spent the majority of interview
time describing the individual job sites, the jobs clients performed at those sites, and the roles
that they, the staff, played in the lives of the clients and the organization.

Staff of Valley of the Sun pointed to specific motivators and catalysts that kept the community
employment movement thriving. Those positive factors included innovative relationships with
RSA; communication throughout the organization; personalized training strategies; and
enlightened employers.

Relationship with RSA.

Valley staff acknowledged that they had learned to adapt RSA grant requirements to the
particular needs of an employment situation, and credited RSA representatives with
willingness to support untested or unfamiliar ideas. Likewise, staff mentioned the ASU
training program as a boon to increased community employment opportunities.

Communication.

Staff noted several very active vehicles for communication throughout the Valley of the Sun,
including weekly employment staff meetings and special events where staff from various
service areas within Valley of the Sun came together. Staff felt connected with plans and
decisions on a timely basis: "So people are pretty informed about what's going on; if there are
changes, you know about it, through weekly meetings, the newsletter, the bulletin board."

Training Strategies.

Staff relayed detailed information about strategies they employed to make clients' work
experiences as meaningful and productive as possible. Examples included using coworker
support when a worker has difficulty dealing with authority figures, and switching places with
a worker, allowing him or her to act as job coach.

> *If I have somebody that acts like they don't know the job or they won't work, then
> you... tell them "next week you can be the job coach for the day." I take the place of
> the client and I ask them every question, every step of the job, and at the end of the
> day, they will tell me all the correct answers. I take my hat back and say "surprise!
> You know what you are doing. You know how to do your work, now let's get to it."*

Such an exercise helped clients realize they were accountable for the knowledge they had. By
encouraging clients and showing them how they could use skills and knowledge, staff claimed
considerable success in moving people to more and more responsible community employment.

Enlightened Employers.

Staff mentioned certain employers who had made special efforts to enhance the strengths and
successes of workers from Valley of the Sun. Some employers were noted for encouraging

interaction between Valley workers and other employees. Other employers had systematically hired enclave workers for individual, competitive jobs. These enlightened employers tended to pay good wages, and to understand that the purpose of the vocational program "is not just to train and move people around." Staff wished aloud that they "could get the concept out everywhere" that enlightened employment practices produced benefits both for workers and for the employers themselves.

Staff clearly expressed widely held positive feelings about their roles, about community employment of clients, and about the enclave model as it suited this population's needs. They did identify three obstacles to the growth of community employment at Valley of the Sun: the extremely strong local economy, problems with their testing system, and contrary visions of the role of the workshop as Valley's future unfolded.

Local Economy.

Valley staff noted an unexpected result of the very strong economy experienced in the Phoenix area. Because the economy was so good, the staff suggested that it was difficult to get and hold onto staff members of high caliber. They talked of a talented staff person, on board for two or three years, who had recently left for a $7,000 increase in pay. Higher pay, better hours, and easier work were readily available in the area. Thus, leadership and continuity in the drive to increase community employment were recurrently sacrificed.

Testing Problems.

The new, sophisticated battery of tests used to determine appropriate placement of clients came under the scrutiny of the staff. If an individual was identified as having some vocational aptitude (someone in the day program, for instance), the workshop supervisor made a report to that effect. Then, the support coordinator makes a referral for vocational testing to be done. Staff reported, however, that many "snags" interfered with this process, including turnover among support coordinators and just "getting the testing done." More difficult was the problem that some people were not accurately reflected by test outcomes, and their potential in the vocational program was thereby limited. Staff offered an example:

We had to get a psychological [assessment], and it painted this person erroneously, I would say. They didn't give him the opportunity to reach his potential that [we] thought he had. This man has cerebral palsy and, if any at all, only very limited mental retardation. His physical limitations were brought out more in the report than his abilities. He will try and try and try. He can drive himself all over town in his electric wheelchair, and they were making him sound like he couldn't even tie his shoelaces. This guy was more gifted than they were giving him credit for. So we disputed the report. We then had to go back and things had to keep going back and starting over again.

Also troubling to staff was the fact that once an individual was tested for vocational placement and deemed inappropriate for the program, there was a great deal of difficulty in getting that person re-tested at a later date. Because the waiting list was so long, re-testing was unlikely. According to staff, testers recognized that many things might influence the results of the test: there might have been a big distraction at the time, or the person being tested may have been under some sort of extraordinary personal pressure. Indeed, very hot weather could affect the outcome. However, the reality of the situation was that re-testing seldom happened. In all, the backlog of tests needing to be done seemed to undermine the effort to increase community employment, and to give the widest possible group of individuals a chance at placement.

The Role of the Workshop.

Among members of the staff at Valley of the Sun, there were differing views of the current and future roles of the workshop. While many felt that ultimately the workshop could and should be phased out of existence, others held strongly to the belief that the workshop played a vital role - one that will endure.

> *I also believe that the ideal situation is that we place everybody with a job, but realistically, we have clients that are never going to be able to be placed in an enclave or in community employment. They are just not going to be able to handle it. Socially, even skill-wise, they are going to need the structure as well as the security that the workshop gives them.*

While staff did not discuss the co-existence of these contrary views, it became evident to the research team over the course of the site visit. It seems inevitable that such disparity of views would impact the forward momentum for building community employment and the organization's vision for the future.

Staff imagined what factors might improve that would increase the potential for good and expanded jobs in the community in the future. On their wish list, they included more placements, more flexibility, and more contact between staff of Valley and other agencies.

Staff repeatedly mentioned that they wished they could engage more vocational consumers, both by referral from RSA and as consumers who chose Valley independently. Coupled with that hope was the concurrent hope that more employers would be encouraged to hire Valley consumers for better jobs. The staff wished for an increased and further diversified population of workers.

In addition to their wish for more consumers in more placements, the staff envisioned increased flexibility in job placements. That flexibility would derive from more and different employers agreeing to hire individuals and enclaves to do work that may not be the "tradition" for consumers with mental retardation, and also from support systems that allowed for more non-traditional work situations (i.e. transportation and staffing).

Staff expressed a desire to connect with other organizations engaged in similar work. Not only would that opportunity afford collegiality and the chance to share ideas, it would increase the collective visibility of the staff in the MR/DD field.

> *I would like for us to meet with them and talk together and find solutions together. If there are more of us, we can be seen better. We all work in our small, little place and it's not enough.*

Day Program and Residential Staff

The Valley of the Sun vocational program overlapped with other organizational components. Some participants in the day program worked part-time in the workshop, for example. Likewise, many consumers of Valley of the Sun residential programs were also consumers in the vocational programs. For that reason, staff from the day and residential programs were interviewed in order to gather their perspectives on the process of change to community employment and on their relationships with the vocational element of Valley. They spoke about what they saw as the motivators and obstacles to increased community employment and to good vocational programming in general.

Staff representatives of residential and day services listed several factors that they thought contributed in a positive way to the development of community employment, and to good programming in vocational services. These factors included: the "new" theory of service

provision promoted by the current CEO, good communication and collaboration across Valley service components, and good and effective training.

Theory of Service Provision.

A new philosophy was ushered in by the change in leadership at the beginning of the 1990s: an era of support as opposed to care, and community living as opposed to protection. Staff from the residential program related this new philosophy in residential terms, and noted that it applied to vocational services as well. This new philosophy, which was continuing to unfold, was key to the process of community employment.

Communication and Collaboration.

From the vantage point of non-employment staff at Valley of the Sun, communication and collaboration between their services and vocational programs seemed healthy and important to the overall vitality of the organization. Decisions were made as part of each consumer's staffing process, and cooperation between service components was key when more than one service component impacted a consumer's life. Communication and collaboration across service components was enhanced, according to residential and day staff, by celebratory events held throughout the year where staff and consumers from the various areas of Valley came together: a Springfest, an Oktoberfest, and a Christmas party. The events featured barbecues, music, and a welcome opportunity for staff to interact.

Training.

Residential and day staff gave high marks to the thirty-five hour training program for new staff, which was organized by a particular staff member at Valley. There were also refresher courses in issues such as medications and civil rights, which longer-term staff attended when appropriate. Formerly, training opportunities had been widely available through the state of Arizona, reimbursed by Valley of the Sun. Supervisory training was also available through one of the colleges, which was reimbursed according to the marks attained by the student/ employee (i.e., 100% reimbursement for an A, 90% reimbursement for a B. As that state-sponsored training had become less available, the importance of the in-house program had become greater than ever. Staff attributed quality service delivery in part to this strong, consistent training component at Valley of the Sun.

The obstacles day and residential staff saw in increased community employment include concerns about the workshop services, transportation, staff turnover, and staff "creaming".

Workshop Services.

A significant portion of the interview focused on concerns staff had with the sheltered workshop. Residential and day program staff noted that there had been marked shrinkage in the workshop program. The consensus was that both money and energies had been redirected to community employment, while the workshop had been largely abandoned as an "orphan child" among the vocational programs. Asked how the overall program would be affected if the workshop "went away," most of the day program staff expressed a need for the workshop to remain as an intermediary step between day programs and community-based programming. One day program staff person voiced a dissenting opinion, noting that the workshop did not fulfill a role as "work," but was all too often a place to "play bingo and play cards and twiddle your thumbs," a fact which she called "really distressing." That staff person said that consumers' expectations were not being met in the workshop, and that they were very verbal in their displeasure about going there.

Transportation.

Although the staff of other Valley programs noted that vans were available for organization use, they confirmed the vocational staff's opinion that not enough vehicles were available to do the desired programming, and that public transportation was not the answer in many troublesome situations. Their transportation needs differed from those of the vocational program but overlapped to an extent, as the scarcity of transportation impacted both consumers' work days and their residential hours, and as day and vocational programs shared the available pool of vehicles.

Staffing.

Staff with long tenure recalled that morale had been tremendously low in the period prior to and during bankruptcy and through the turbulent time of change in the early 1990s. Turnover was rampant. Staff were so anxious about being paid that they ran to the bank as soon as their work day ended. Reportedly, the first two hundred Valley staff to cash their checks would be paid; the rest might or might not be able to cash their checks, depending on the organization's bank balance. Accordingly, there was little staff commitment to the organization. When the current CEO came into office, "things stabilized, and there was also a shift in the philosophy about how services were going to be delivered." All services, including day, residential and vocational services, became more community-focused. There was a focus on trying to slow the rate of turnover. Salaries increased. Dental and medical benefits were offered for the first time to all staff, along with life insurance and a retirement plan. "Employee of the Month" awards were initiated. Since that time, turnover has greatly decreased, and though the staff, including the CEO, joked about the turnover issue, everyone knew that it was a serious and vital issue, and treated it as such.

Staff Creaming.

As a new hire entered the Valley of the Sun system, he or she was trained fairly extensively in organization protocol, values, and strategies. It became apparent that a large percentage of new Valley staff were going through training only to leave the organization as soon as they were trained in order to take a position for more money at another organization. Valley found that a particular organization was intentionally hiring newly trained staff away from Valley of the Sun, luring them to comparable, higher-paying jobs. Valley administration confronted the organization in question, and demanded that it stop the practice. Still, well-trained employees at Valley are attractive candidates for positions at other agencies, and the problem of sustaining a trained, qualified staff remained a difficulty in ensuring good and progressive programming at Valley of the Sun. A direct service staff person stated that,

> *If people could change anything, it would be being able to pay staff more, being able to recruit better staff, and staff that would stay for a longer period of time. That's kind of a frustration for people.*

Consumers

Consumers were interviewed at various job sites and in a roundtable discussion at Valley of the Sun's main facility. Their assessment of the organization and their particular experiences in the vocational program gave voice to important considerations in current and future programming.

In general, the consumers who were interviewed expressed satisfaction with their jobs. Most had aspirations for jobs that would fulfill personal goals. For example, one man hoped someday to work with animals, and held very specific goals around that future plan. Although one consumer said that he preferred contract work at the Valley of the Sun workshop, most

wish to have or to keep jobs in the community. One consumer offered that, while she worked part time in the workshop and part time in the community, she favored her community-based work. Pressed to explain why, she noted that "the workshop is the same. It's the same every year. Things change a lot here [in the community]."

Another consumer pinpointed the variety associated with his schedule as a positive element in his work life. He worked at an enclave job site on Tuesdays and Thursdays and in the cafeteria at the Valley facility on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. "I like to do different things," he explained.

Several consumers claimed that they liked building practical skills in the workshop before engaging in that task at a work site. They offered the example of learning to roll napkins around silverware in the more relaxed workshop setting, then transferring that skill to an enclave position.

More than one consumer mentioned a specific job coach and/or job developer as being especially helpful and resourceful in planning a productive work experience. In all, consumers expressed positive feelings and hopeful views of the future at Valley of the Sun.

Family Members

Parents and families of Valley vocational consumers met in a roundtable discussion, where they informally offered their views on the organization and on the change to community employment, as it had affected their family member. All expressed quite positive opinions of Valley staff and programs, though they noted several issues that they felt must be addressed. In all, the families focused their discussion on positive and negative elements in the delivery of services in general, but had less to say specifically about the impact of different factors on the growth of community employment.

Parents and families viewed Valley as a place that offered both challenges and safety. That balance was woven through their discussion of the positive elements of the Valley vocational program. Those positive elements included continuity; staff quality; solid communication with staff; the continuum of services available; and special events that included staff consumers and families.

Continuity.

Parents and families valued the lifelong association with Valley available from school age onward. That sense of continuity extended to the families' perception of personnel and training, which they viewed as appreciably stable and dependable.

Quality of Personnel. Parents reported a positive impression of Valley's vocational staff, specifically noting their professionalism, courtesy, and willingness to offer opportunities to consumers. While parents acknowledged that there would always be personality issues between staff and consumers and between staff and families, the interviewed family members concurred that the responsiveness of Valley staff kept those personality issues from becoming stumbling blocks to good programming.

Communication with Staff.

Family members agreed that communication between families and staff was a very positive variable in establishing and maintaining good work experiences for consumers. Family members valued the honesty and straightforwardness that they encountered in Valley staff. One family member credited the staff with explaining a great deal to her since she had become the guardian for her sister, a Valley consumer.

They explained the whole process to me and have gone step by step with me as far as what to do in terms of Social Security and what papers I need to [submit] and things like that. They keep me informed of all meetings and I attend all those.

One long-time Valley parent confirmed that this positive experience was not an isolated case, but found communication with parents a very strong asset at Valley. Parents recalled instances when they had important and troublesome concerns, and needed to convey those to staff. Parents reported feeling "listened to", and had the impression that staff would do "all that they could" to meet the needs of each consumer. In cases where there were differences of opinion, one parent reported that Valley personnel "don't take the stand that 'my job coach is right, the consumer is wrong.' It's a mutual problem."

Service Continuum.

While pleased with community opportunities, the families strongly supported continuing the workshop. Acknowledging that there had been "movements to do away with it," one parent strongly declared that the workshop environment seemed the best possible one for some consumers. Several other family members, who noted that the workshop felt secure to them and/or to their family member who worked there, echoed her opinion. They felt it circumvented some of the pressures and fears that had emerged when the consumers had tried community-based work. Likewise, the workshop represented a safety net for times between jobs, or in case of radical change.

Although [she] does beautifully working right now, what if something happened down the road to her- God forbid, she had a stroke or something- and became incapable of working out in the community. If she didn't have a workshop here to work at, she would deteriorate, because [she] thrives on going to work.

Further, family members emphasized the importance of the social function of the workshop, and the friendships that were nurtured there. They discounted the problem of low workshop wages, arguing that the amount was of no importance, that only the ritual of getting a paycheck mattered. One parent stated "Whether it's $10 or $100 makes no difference. It's just the idea that he has earned some money and has some pride in what he is doing in the workshop."

Even a family member whose son had successfully moved to community employment gave strong support to retaining the workshop. The parent concluded, "We have done real well [with community employment], but I think the sheltered workshops have their place because it depends on the level of the person."

Likewise, one parent lauded the Valley Auxiliary's thrift store in its role in the continuum of vocational services. A parent described the store as similar to a Goodwill secondhand store, with various jobs in sorting and preparing inventory for sale. It was used as a "stepping stone" from sheltered work to integrated employment, with the attendant balance of security and real world experience. Family members repeatedly supported the continuum of services, and the incremental steps a consumer could take from sheltered to community-based work.

Special Events.

One parent mentioned the special events planned throughout the year as being positive experiences in the lives of consumers. Events included parties, dances, and barbecues, to which family members were invited as well. Like much of the positive assessment of Valley's vocational services, family members returned to the theme of personal attention and solid personal relationships that accrued from the consumer's association with Valley of the Sun.

Despite their overall positive assessment of Valley's work programs, family members cited

numerous problems that they hoped Valley of the Sun would address in order to assure the best possible future for vocational programming. These concerns included downtime in the workshop, gaps in communication, lack of parental access to the board of directors, lack of an active parent group, and consumer resistance to risk-taking and change.

Workshop Downtime.

Parents urged workshop staff to bring more work into the workshop in order to decrease the amount of downtime experienced by consumers. While this unproductive time bothered family members, they did note that workshop staff had recently initiated discussion groups in the workshop when there was no work. They discussed topics of importance to consumers, and gave the consumers the chance to participate and express themselves. Nonetheless, family members preferred that there be more work and less downtime.

Communication Gap.

While one-to-one communication between staff and families got high marks from family members, families felt that the organization's leadership failed to communicate plans and changes in a dependable and systematic way. Family members felt that they should be informed, and even included in planning change, "not just told after the fact." During the upheaval of the early 1990s, parents had been closely involved and informed of the status of the organization. That level of communication no longer existed between Valley and its constituent families. An organization newsletter had been sent out, however, the parents gathered at this interview differed in their perception of who got the newsletter and why certain parents were included in the mailing list and others were not. The consensus was that organizational communication was uneven and irregular. In particular, consumers who worked "off campus" failed to get important communication, as did their families. Family members considered this a breakdown in communication, and a problem that could be remedied.

Parental Access to the Board.

Another form of family empowerment was the parent group, which was quite active during the time of Valley's transition and crisis and for a period of time afterwards.

> *Everybody was interested and wanted frequent updates and we had a real good parent group. The attendance started falling off and it got down to just three or four parents who would show up every time. We had officers and we held rummage sales to raise funds, but it just died. Once the crisis was sort of done, it lost its energy.*

Parents who recalled the former vitality of the parent group wondered whether such an organization might ever be revived.

Resistance to Change.

Family members were conscious of a tendency among some of their family members to avoid change and risk-taking. That avoidance might take the form of limiting work output in order to stay in a current, secure program. For other consumers, family members mentioned that discomfort had a negative effect on the consumer's disposition.

For some family members themselves, the notion of their relative moving into a community-based job raised genuine anxieties. One parent described her son as being "at the peak of physical health." She in no way wanted to jeopardize his healthy, stress-free life by pressuring him to perform in a community setting.

> *I feel that to move my son from these facility-based services would in no way serve his best interest, and would perhaps put a burden on him and perhaps the rest of his family by being in an improper placement.*

Another family member admitted that she refused transportation training for her sister because of her own fears.

> *They have asked me several times about training for... the bus, but I have to decline that because I guess I'm scared. There's just really not nice people out there... I made a promise to my parents that I would take care of her and that's what I do, so it's been my choice that she not take the bus.*

Family members offered three pieces of advice, both for Valley's future planning, and for other agencies who might undertake a change to community employment: beware of mixing people with different disabilities in a single program; prepare and take precautions at job sites; and communicate with all constituents fully and in a timely fashion.

Program Clientele.

One parent had seen indications that the organization might be moving toward combining individuals with disabilities besides developmental disabilities, in the Valley vocational program. She felt considerable concern at that prospect, and cautioned against such a move.

> *I would not like to see this job training program open to people whose primary [disability] was other than developmental disability. Because, here again, for someone whose primary problem is mental illness, I don't want to see this mix or labeling. I am not talking about labeling per se; I am talking about intermingling people who perhaps should not be intermingled. A lot of people are being labeled as handicapped who are not developmentally disabled, and I don't want to see, for the sake of getting more sophisticated work contracts, this workshop opened to too broad a spectrum. I want to see it retained for developmentally disabled.*

Preparation for Jobs.

Family members advised that job sites be fully examined across several dimensions before a job was offered to a consumer. Family spokespeople considered it important to make sure that an employer understood that consumers often resisted changes in routine. They considered it likewise vital to check the stress level on the job. Job coaches must be careful screened and properly paired with consumers. For community employment to be worthwhile, all these elements must be taken into consideration.

Communication.

As an extension of the communication concerns detailed earlier in this interview, family members reiterated the importance of timely and complete communication of plans, changes, and organizational details that could or might affect consumers. For community employment to survive and thrive, this caveat was especially important in the eyes of families, because the population of consumers was dispersed geographically.

Funding Agencies

Two representatives of the Arizona Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) met with researchers. One representative was an RSA administrator who had a long association with Valley of the Sun, the other was a counselor who worked with many Valley clients.

The RSA representatives communicated their understanding that Valley of the Sun became motivated to move into community employment when the current CEO came into office. At the time of the organization, bankruptcy and internal upheaval, the current CEO was chosen for the top leadership position. He urged the vocational program to move toward community placement, which he viewed, according to the administrative RSA representative, as "an up-

and-coming thing, and one that makes perfect sense." It so happened that the CEO's forecast for community employment met both the philosophical and practical test. The first experiences with community employment proved an asset to the organization, and several motivating forces swept Valley of the Sun into large-scale community-based employment. Those motivators included RSA's lead in encouraging and funding community employment, a positive ongoing relationship with RSA, and good job development.

Leadership.

RSA representatives recalled that in the early '90s, the state vocational organization solidified its position as strongly favoring community employment options for person with mental retardation and other developmental disabilities. Valley of the Sun had already done some individual placements in the community, and staff were already being urged by their CEO to greatly increase that strategy. However, RSA representatives claimed that they did not know that Valley of the Sun was:

> *...that much into moving folks [into community] until it became an issue that we wanted facilities to be doing that. Valley was saying, "we have to jump on that idea, getting folks out."*

RSA noted that, since that time, the state agency had given "a lot of effort" to getting people into the community.

Relationship with RSA.

RSA considered Valley a strong provider of community-based employment services. Hence, the relationship between Valley and RSA continued to be strong and respectful. RSA mentioned that among Valley's positive attributes was its very individualized care for consumers. RSA representatives gave examples of Valley staff checking up on consumers who were out sick and accommodating special tastes and interests. Further, RSA representatives complimented Valley for truly listening to parents, and not dismissing what families said. Even when fiscal issues demanded that RSA make difficult decisions that would negatively impact Valley's funding, the response from Valley was typically one of collaboration and commiseration.

Good Job Development.

RSA credited Valley's strong job development process for stimulating and maintaining the trend toward community employment at the organization. One RSA spokesperson gave high marks to a particular Valley job developer who "thinks outside the box." Job developers were seen as both on target with their objectives and willing to acknowledge what was not working. According to RSA interviewees, they "just remember to keep progressing and taking steps forward."

The representatives from RSA enumerated certain obstacles that stood between Valley and its full potential for developing community employment opportunities. These obstacles included problems with the organization's workshop, parent resistance; the tendency to "fill slots," and the detrimental aspects of state funding.

Workshop Problems.

RSA representatives spoke of the Valley workshop as beset with difficulties, some of which hampered the movement to more community employment, others which simply made the workshop less productive, stimulating, and viable. As more Valley consumers moved into community, the sheltered workshop experienced a "creaming" problem. The best workers moved out, leaving those consumers who were less able to do the required jobs. Lower

production led to decreased cost-effectiveness. With lower production that was necessarily less challenging, the flow of contracts to the workshop dwindled. While the diminished status and capacity of the workshop had little effect on the relationship with RSA, that agency's representatives were able to discern the negative impact that workshop problems had on the vocational program as a whole. When asked, the RSA representatives had no ready ideas for "fixing" those workshop woes, but referred to it as a "no-win situation."

Parent Resistance.

The RSA representatives named parent resistance as a chief obstacle to fuller community employment. They acknowledged that some consumers should be in community-based work, but that their parents fought that possibility. A representative related a recent phone conversation with a parent who was upset at the lack of work in the sheltered workshop. When the RSA representative asked her if she had considered community placement for her adult child, the parent responded, "No, someone might bother him." The RSA staff person fought the urge to say, "Well, tough; he's an adult!" Not only were there many parents who wanted their family member to stay in the workshop, but many others preferred enclave settings to something more individual. According to an RSA spokesperson, family members viewed being with Valley staff as more secure than an individual placement.

Slot System.

RSA expressed the wish that Valley of the Sun would take more initiative in getting consumers out into community jobs, and resist the temptation to fill a job slot because it is open, rather than finding a placement based on an individual's skills and desires.

> *And a lot of times, I see...someone goes from shelter to enclave, and it's because there is a spot rather than Susie wants to work, her variety of interests is such and such. I would like to see them get outside the box, which maybe will be uncomfortable.*

State Funding.

RSA representatives viewed state funding practices as major deterrents to increased community employment. In general, the RSA administrator and the Valley CEO were in agreement that Arizona state legislators responded poorly to the changing needs of employment services for people with disabilities. Underfunding for RSA meant fewer resources available for provider agencies. Thus, less progressive programming can be funded.

Board of Directors

 The chairperson of the board of directors was interviewed as the representative of the larger board. The board chairperson brought with her a wealth of knowledge and experience in the MR/DD field, both as a long-time member of the board holding various offices and as the parent of a consumer who was involved in Valley's vocational program.

Valley's board chairperson named several factors that she saw as motivators to the community employment movement. She recalled the early days of the integrated employment initiative, when the organization hired the current CEO, and was embroiled in the turmoil of massive change.

She credited "most of the progress" that had been enjoyed by Valley's vocational program in the 1990s to the CEO's "excellent ability to lead." The chairperson recalled that there was a tremendous amount of reorganization in the early '90s, and that the CEO had been fully aware of and in control of the many elements of that change.

The lagging performance of the workshop acted as a positive force in getting the "ball rolling" to community employment strategies. The CEO became aware that the workshop was losing

money, and that the future of the workshop did not look good. Families were complaining, on behalf of their family members in the workshop, that the family members,

> *...were just sitting many times without things to do, and that it was very repetitious and... they didn't feel like there was a lot of advancement. It was very menial and they weren't learning much. They were sort of little cogs in a wheel sitting there. And their full potential was not being met. I felt that way also.*

Based partly on this negative assessment of the workshop's performance, voiced here by the board chairperson, the CEO set up the community employment option. The board concurred that, indeed, this integrated approach was "the way to go."

At the crucial point where the finances of the organization and the poor performance of the workshop were manifesting, Valley knew that changes would have to come. Philosophically, the chairperson reported, the consensus among the Valley staff and board was that community-based employment was critically important to getting away from the "old locked door" mentality that underpinned unenlightened community sentiment. Virtually all of the decision-makers at Valley of the Sun "valued that change" to integrated community employment. Likewise, those decision-makers clearly understood that the community-based option made fiscal sense in a time of severe financial difficulty. The convergence of the philosophical belief and the fiscal appropriateness of the change moved community-based employment to center stage in Valley's vocational program.

The board chairperson suggested that the continuum from day program to workshop to thrift store to enclave to individual community employment was a boon to sustaining a healthy vocational program. She valued the balance between risk-taking and security that such an arrangement featured. It allowed movement into a riskier situation, with a "safety net" in case a given placement did not work for the individual.

The Board chairperson detailed two factors that she considered obstacles to more complete community employment: community attitudes and consumer resistance. As a parent, the Board chairperson reported firsthand experience with unenlightened community attitudes toward people with disabilities. She spoke in the present tense when she explained that much of the community continued to hold the attitude that persons with disabilities should be hidden away. She considered the biggest hurdle to community employment to be the need to educate the community that people have a right to work in their communities and that people with disabilities can work. She wanted the general public to know that people with disabilities "are very loyal and probably your best workers."

The second negative factor constraining the growth of community employment, according to the Board chairperson, was consumer resistance to the notion. She noted that fears of various kinds often accompanied the idea of working in the community. She cited her own son's reaction as an example:

> *I think he is capable of doing a lot more, but he is so tied into this facility that he's afraid if he gets any better they will ship him out somewhere else. So he kind of manipulates it to stay. He loves the thrift store; he loves what he is doing, and I can see him not increasing his work [output].*

The Board chairperson had two suggestions for agencies involved in the change to integrated employment. First, she would urge such agencies to educate the board members about the programs and the process of change. Second, she advised that agencies move incrementally into programmatic change:

> *Don't take a big leap from here to here; try to look at a small leap with this in mind for the future. Don't just shove it into place and move onto another program. You need to do it in small steps.*

Update: March 1999 Site Visit

In March, 1999, fifteen months after the initial visit to Valley of the Sun, researchers from the Institute for Community Inclusion returned to that organization to assess the changes during the intervening period. At the point of the second visit, Valley of the Sun staff expressed positive feelings about its programming and its future, including employment services. Changes within and outside the organization had impacted the delivery of community-based employment during the fifteen-month interval. The primary differences were an increased focus on outreach to the community for development and marketing purposes, and increases in both the workshop and enclave programs.

External Changes

Trends and events outside the organization had an important impact on Valley of the Sun during the fifteen months between visits. The major shift was the state legislature's decision to provide employment services for all individuals on the Division of Developmental Disabilities services waiting lists. With that move, a cadre of new consumers needing employment and day services were referred to Valley of the Sun. The surge of consumers expanded the workshop, required new community placements and tested the capacity of Valley to quickly address the needs of the new group. At the time of the first visit, the workshop had a decreased caseload and limited activities. The addition of new consumers increased the size and energy surrounding the workshop and therefore the movement away from the intention to discontinue this service. Direct staff reported greater satisfaction with the workshop services than in the previous visit.

In addition to the provision of services to individuals on the waiting list, the state decided to increase funding for residential services provided to consumers of Developmental Disabilities services. This rate increase resulted in a salary increase that Valley applied to all staff. Although all rehabilitation staff were paid exclusively from Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) funding and not through DD, the management of Valley felt that it was important to keep salaries consistent across the organization's programs. Thus, all staff received salary increases, which reportedly improved morale across all programs, including employment.

An additional external factor that impacted Valley of the Sun staff was the increase in for-profit employment organizations serving individuals with developmental disabilities. Staff expressed concern about competition from these entities, noting that the nature of for-profit enterprise allowed these organizations to use different resources.

Internal Changes

Chief among the internal changes were shifts in the executive leadership. The chief financial officer left the organization between the times of the two visits, and the position was not refilled. Instead, the remaining members of the executive team absorbed his responsibilities. The president/CEO had reduced his role and appointed a new executive director, the director of residential services who also maintained his previous responsibilities. The president continued to supervise two executive team members, the director of vocational services and the director of day services, and assumed certain financial responsibilities. The executive team was now composed of its four long-time members. These changes in the executive team were just being implemented at the time of the second visit; their full effect was unclear, especially as they impacted the new executive director/residential director.

Another change within the organization was a major push to interact with the community, with a focus on increasing political and financial alliances. A "strategic planning" meeting of key community members was planned for a date immediately after the March, 1999 site visit.

The agenda for meeting focused on educating the attendees about Valley services and debunking myths associated with individuals with disabilities. Discussion of the roles community members could play in conjunction with Valley of the Sun was the final agenda item. Participation in this meeting was primarily focused on the executive staff, and several direct staff members indicated they were not aware that it was occurring.

Several staff changes focused on increasing Valley's efforts in marketing and connecting with the community. A consultant had begun working with the executive team in these areas. The consultant was well known within the business community, and his ready-made network was seen as a major strength. It was his connections that led to what was anticipated to be a very high turnout at the strategic planning meeting. Also hired during that period was a development person with specific grantsmanship responsibilities. Though the grants submitted or underway to date did not have a direct impact on employment programming, they were targeted at enhancing the general welfare and quality of life for Valley consumers. A capital campaign, having met with poor initial response prior to the first ICI visit, had been reassessed and the campaign goal lowered to a more realistic level. Improved community relations were hoped to stimulate more successful fundraising in the future. She supported the concept of increased individual placement but finds that the majority of their referrals are for enclaves. Direct staff were pleased with the new enclave placements and placed less of an emphasis on expanding individual jobs.

Additional changes were newly underway or envisioned for the near future. Changes in the board of directors' composition had occurred, and there was hope of "new blood," fresh ideas, and new linkages to key community resources. Talks were underway with Arizona State University (ASU) to explore expansion of the training program for Valley consumers. The executive team reported increased interaction with schools, and saw that collaboration was a significant benefit to Valley programming. In looking to the future, Valley of the Sun pointed to its new copy center and plans for a print shop as fiscal enhancements to the organization.

In addition to the increase in consumers served in the workshop, Valley had increased the number of enclaves and number of individuals served in this setting. The majority of enclaves were in the food service industry and typically involved cleaning or prep work prior to opening for the day. The struggle between group and individual placements continued to be an issue for Valley. The representatives from the RSA reported a desire for Valley to develop more individual placements; however, the director of rehabilitation services felt that Valley had been " pigeon-holed" as the enclave organization. While she supported the concept of increased individual placement, she found that the majority of their referrals were for enclaves. Direct staff were pleased with the new enclave placements and placed less emphasis on expanding individual jobs.

Valley also had a change in the nature of individuals referred for services via a new contract to work with consumers who have Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). Direct staff reported receiving additional training to prepare them to serve this population. Consumers with TBI would most likely be served in the new ASU placements that were being developed.

Conclusion

Valley of Sun experienced considerable change between the two site visits. Internal and external factors contributed to improved staff morale, an increased consumer base and renewed efforts at establishing a stronger connection to the community. These changes resulted in some shifting of emphasis and Valley moved away from its effort to reduce its workshop services. The director of rehabilitation continued to work toward the goal of individual, community placements, but was challenged in maintaining this focus.

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