

Justice Department Press Conference Talking Points

Today's agreement with the Dept. of Justice was signed by four State entities – in addition to myself as Director of BHDDH, it was signed by the Commissioner of the Department of Education, the Director of the Department of Human Services on behalf of the Office of Rehabilitative Services, and the Secretary of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services.

This represents the commitment of the State to fulfill the intent and spirit of this agreement to work as one team along with the Providence School Department, and going forward, school system throughout the State. This collaboration will ensure a system where students graduate with the skills and experience necessary to enter into competitive employment and will ensure an adult system that supports and ensures the availabilities of these opportunities.

Our discussions with the Department of Justice acknowledged the previous work that we had begun to transform our system of care through the initiation of 'Employment First' through BHDDH. This agreement now supports a more rapid implementation and guarantees that this will be expanded to a state-wide, interagency Employment First policy.

We all agree that segregated day activities need to be replaced by fully integrated community activities with a focus on full employment.

We have already laid the groundwork for this transformation and this agreement puts the full weight of the Justice Department behind this plan of action.

We have already begun to eliminate sheltered workshops in RI including the one at TTP. And, we have initiated a series of trainings to

provide job development, job support and job retention for individuals with developmental disabilities.

Many of us are proud to be part of this major change – the first one in this field since the closing of our institutions. Rhode Island is one of a small number of state's that no longer have any state institutions for individuals with developmental disabilities when we closed the Ladd Center. That first transformation led to the establishment of group homes and sheltered workshops. Now, Rhode Island will join a select number of states that will work to close its sheltered workshops as well as segregated day centers.

Since the fall of 2012, BHDDH had begun investigating incidents and complaints at TTP, several of which resulted in the Department helping individuals choose new residential and day program services.

The Department's Quality Improvement Unit made written recommendations to TTP on January 10, 2013, putting the agency on notice regarding the Department's concerns for the quality of care and services being provided to participants and requesting corrective action.

Due to TTP's demonstrated inability to maintain compliance with the Department's new regulations, BHDDH took a licensing action against TTP on February 7, 2013 and issued a Conditional License with stipulations.

On Monday, March 11, 2013 BHDDH took the unprecedented action of entering into a contract with Fedcap Rehabilitation Services, Inc. (Fedcap) to assume temporary management of the day to day operations of Training Thru Placement, Inc. (TTP) through a contract with BHDDH. This action also supported the replacement of several staff members at TTP and later lead to the reporting to police of the

incident which resulted in embezzlement charges against two former TTP staff members including its former Executive Director.

Since assuming the daily management of TTP, Fedcap has focused on establishing client centered programming that will prepare TTP participants to become employed in integrated community- based settings, has conducted outreach to the business community and has significantly enhanced the infrastructure to support daily operations.

To ensure that TTP clients have the vocational skills required to be able to secure integrated employment opportunities, Fedcap has launched two vocational training programs within TTP: culinary arts and facilities management.

Fedcap is actively engaging the business community and establishing partnerships to develop an array of employment opportunities for TTP participants.

BHDDH will continue to provide close monitoring and oversight of the services delivered at TTP while at the same time continuing to affect change throughout the rest of the service delivery system. Following the issuance of our “Employment First” policy, we also issued a “New Participant” Policy which stipulates that new participants in the adult system cannot, under any circumstances, be approved of services at a sheltered workshop. This will permanently close off the flow of young adults and new individuals into those programs.

It is the State’s intent that over the next three (3) to five (5) years, providers of services to individuals with developmental disabilities shall no longer operate sheltered workshops and/or segregated day programs.

The State is committed to a transformative system of change, not only for TTP, but the entire service delivery system for individuals with developmental disabilities transitioning into adult services.

Rhode Island is part of a national movement toward greater emphasis on community employment that echoes the general shift toward services designed to integrate individuals with DD into their communities with the same opportunities and responsibilities as all citizens.

As members of the State's workforce, these individuals will bring greater diversity and value to their communities while gaining economic independence and freedom.

This State policy to promote and require community integration and employment opportunities and services will not only benefit individuals with disabilities in terms of building relationships, friendships, and creating a sense of self-worth, but it will also benefit society by creating a greater understanding of the wide range of capabilities individuals with developmental disabilities have - as co-workers, fellow community members, colleagues and peers.

Individuals with disabilities have the right to live integrated lives by participating in all aspects of community life including integrated employment opportunities and supports.