

Case STUDY

Mathematica's Center for Studying Disability Policy provides rigorous, objective disability policy research, collects data from the people disability policy aims to serve, and supplies the nation's policymakers with the information they need to navigate the transition to 21st. century disability policy. For more information, visit our website at www.DisabilityPolicyResearch.org

Noelle Denny-Brown and Marisa Shenk

Pathways to Careers Employer Case Study: **Davis School District**

The SourceAmerica Pathways to Careers (Pathways) program helps people with intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD) and people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) obtain competitive integrated employment aligned with their skills, interests, strengths, and abilities. The Pathways service model is reliant on partnerships with employer organizations in the private, nonprofit, and public sectors that represent a range of career areas and will host interns and ultimately employ participants, if the internship is successful. To achieve permanent employment, employer partners must offer participants job training; ongoing employment supports, including natural supports in the workplace; and a work environment that meets participants' conditions for success.¹

In this case study, we examine the Davis School District (DSD) in Davis County, Utah, to understand the factors that have contributed to its successful partnership with the Pathways program. We define highly successful partnerships as those in which the employer has hosted a minimum of four Pathways internships, hired at least two Pathways participants, and used the employer payroll tax adjustment (EPTA).² Of the 93 Utah employers that have already partnered with Pathways, 2 meet these criteria: the DSD and Futura Industries which we feature in a separate case study. In addition to meeting these criteria, the DSD was selected because it is a large local public entity, is the second-largest employer in Davis County, and employs four Pathways participants.

Building successful partnerships with employers who will host internships and employ Pathways participants is vital to the success of the Pathways initiative. Understanding the conditions under which a successful partnership is possible can help shape staff's outreach to prospective employers and interactions with managers during the internship and employment periods. Furthermore, this case study can aid in the program's replicability as the service model is expanded beyond the four demonstration sites.

About the Pathways to Careers Program

The Pathways service model was developed by SourceAmerica in consultation with Marc Gold & Associates (MG&A). SourceAmerica is one of two nonprofit organizations that administer the AbilityOne program, which creates employment opportunities on federal government contracts for people with disabilities through a network of nonprofit agency partners. MG&A trained Pathways staff on the key service components and provided technical assistance after the program launched. Descriptions of these five service components follow:

- **Discovery** is a strengths-based assessment of a Pathways participant that focuses on identifying the interests, skills, and conditions for success for each participant. Examples of ideal work conditions include the participant's work schedule, his or her commute to and from work, and the management style of his or her direct supervisor. To uncover the ideal conditions in which the participant can work, Pathways staff members observe the participant in a variety of settings, including the participant's home and community, in 10 to 15 Discovery sessions, culminating in a career-planning meeting with the career navigator, employer facilitator, participant, and family members to identify criteria for the ideal internship or employment match.
- **Expanded Discovery and paid internships** provide the opportunity to affirm or expand on what was learned about each individual during Discovery to further identify each participant's ideal conditions for success. Paid internships allow Pathways participants to try different job responsibilities and determine whether the job is a suitable placement for them. Participants can experience one or more 8- to 12-week paid internships and develop a greater experience base from which to make decisions about employment. Pathways, rather than the employer, provides salary, benefits, and employment supports (for example, job coaching or transportation). At the end of the internship, if a job offer is extended, the participant can move into employment or wait for placement in another internship.
- **Employment supports (and integrated behavioral health/mental health services)** are identified in the Discovery and Expanded Discovery phases, and a support plan is developed for each person. If needed, behavioral health and/or mental health services are coordinated with and/or identified and incorporated into the employment support plan. These integrated services are meant to help each participant successfully access and maintain employment.
- **Employment and the Employer Payroll Tax Adjustment (EPTA)** are additional components of the Pathways model if the participant accepts an employment offer. When a Pathways participant becomes employed, a Pathways staff member will help the participant negotiate wages, work schedule, and benefits.
- **Post-employment career support** is offered by Pathways staff members after the participant has accepted a job offer. Staff work with participants and employers to identify training, professional development, and educational opportunities, as well as mentors who will support their career development. Staff also help address concerns the participant or employer may have about the participant's success in the job.

Pathways launched its program in Clearfield, Utah in 2012 and is being implemented by the Pioneer Adult Rehabilitation Center (PARC), a community rehabilitation program. Pathways has since expanded to three other sites in Massachusetts, Michigan, and Virginia in 2015. SourceAmerica contracted with Mathematica Policy Research to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the Pathways to Career program.

on page 1

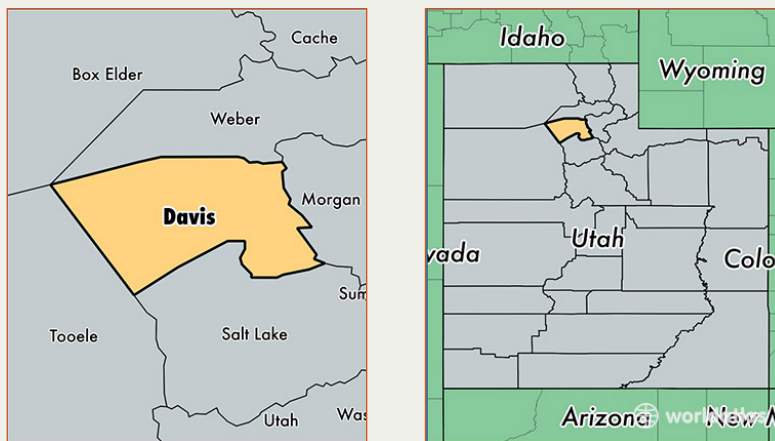
¹ Conditions for success are the conditions in the participant's work environment (management style of direct supervisor, familiarization with job tasks, and needed accommodations) that will contribute to a successful placement for the individual (Marc Gold & Associates 2015).

² If the Pathways participant earns at least \$750 per month, the employer is eligible to receive EPTA payments ranging from \$167 to \$583 per month per participant, depending on the participant's earnings and health plan enrollment. In Utah, Pathways will provide the EPTA for up to five years per participant.

About the Davis School District

The Davis School District is in the north central part of the state of Utah. It is the second-largest school district in Utah, comprised of 89 schools serving more than 71,000 students in grades K–12. In addition to operating all traditional public schools in the district, it operates two alternative schools and offers three special-purpose programs: (1) PARC, a community rehabilitation program serving people with disabilities that also administers the Pathways to Careers program; (2) the Family Enrichment Center, which provides preschool and Head Start programs; and (3) Farmington Bay, a youth correctional facility (Leffel et al. 2016). The DSD is large; its operating budget for fiscal year 2016 was \$439 million, and it is the second-largest employer in Davis County, employing more than 6,000 full-time employees and approximately 8,000 total employees (Leffel et al. 2016). Full-time employees receive retirement benefits, health insurance, sick leave, life insurance, and short- and long-term disability insurance.

Map of the Davis School District



Source: www.worldatlas.com.

The research questions focused on understanding why the DSD chose to participate in Pathways, the DSD's experience with the EPTA that Pathways offers, and DSD staff perceptions of the Pathways program. The research questions also explored the district's experience hosting Pathways participants as interns and its experience with the employees hired through the Pathways program, from both the employer's and the participants' perspectives. We summarize key lessons learned here:

- Paid internships and the EPTA were key factors in deciding to collaborating with Pathways.
- An optimal job match occurs when a participant's talents and skills fill an organizational need.
- Two former Pathways participants who have secured permanent employment in the DSD have achieved financial independence.
- Employers should be open to partnering with Pathways and hiring workers with disabilities because of the substantial contributions these individuals can bring to the workforce.

Data and Methods

We conducted a case study of the Davis School District to explore in depth an employer that has successfully partnered with the Pathways to Careers program. We met with several respondents to capture a wide range of perspectives on the DSD's relationship with the Pathways program. We conducted semistructured, in-person interviews with a high-level administrator in the district, an elementary school principal who directly supervises one former Pathways participant, and a manager who supervises a Pathways participant who works in the printing department. The interviews covered the employer's experience hiring workers with disabilities, motivations for partnering with Pathways, experiences with Pathways internships and employees hired through Pathways, and satisfaction with the Pathways program. We also met with three Pathways participants to obtain their perspective on their experiences working as an intern and as permanent employees for the DSD. Finally, we met with two Pathways staff who have interacted with the DSD since it partnered with Pathways.

This case study synthesizes information collected from these eight respondents. Descriptive statistics on service use are from Pathways program data. Because the employers that have partnered with Pathways are unique in size, workforce, industry type, and employment sector, generalizability is limited, so the factors contributing to a successful placement at this employer will differ from the experiences of other employer partners. In addition, the supports provided to Pathways participants after the DSD hired them may differ from the supports provided to other participants who have secured employment through Pathways, due to differences in individual skills, abilities, and needs for supports on the job.

EARLY INVOLVEMENT WITH THE PATHWAYS TO CAREERS PROGRAM

We interviewed a DSD administrator, an elementary school principal, and a direct supervisor; we asked them about their early involvement with Pathways to understand why the school district chose to participate in the program. Understanding the employer's motivations for participating in Pathways can inform the program's employer recruitment efforts. It also can aid program staff in the newer Pathways sites who are building their networks of employer partners. As Pathways expands, it must continue to increase its network of participating employers so that internship and employment opportunities become available for the growing number of program participants with varying career interests.

Davis School District Vision Statement

The Davis School District provides an environment where learning comes first. Students master essential learning skills, demonstrate civic responsibility, prepare for postsecondary education and careers, and engage in positive personal development. Parents are invested in their student's education. Employees recognize the value of their individual contributions and commit to excellence. The community supports the educational process.

Source: Davis School District Strategic Plan.
<http://www.davis.k12.ut.us/Page/13>

The Pathways project director gave a presentation to the DSD administrators and Cabinet members. DSD leadership knows PARC; it oversees PARC, which administers the Pathways program. The presentation was positively received. Although the presentation generated some support for the initiative among DSD leadership, one respondent who strongly advocated for partnering with the program noted it would have been helpful to learn about the details of the program and how it would be implemented for the DSD before the presentation because it would have helped him better advocate for Pathways from the very beginning.

DSD administrators reportedly did not have concerns about employing people with disabilities before participating in Pathways, although it was not a priority. The DSD already had some experience hiring people with disabilities, particularly individuals with visual and mobility impairments. Before participating in Pathways, the DSD had hired people with physical disabilities to fill teaching and other roles; the DSD provided job accommodations to these individuals in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The DSD had also provided job opportunities through PARC's day training and facility-based employment program for adults with disabilities.

At first, DSD leadership was unsure whether Pathways participants could be accommodated in its workplace environment. One respondent spoke of working in a prior position with a colleague with a disability; the respondent stated that this person's work product was of inconsistent quality, and the person exhibited unexpected behaviors that disrupted the workplace. This respondent noted that some DSD staff speculated that Pathways participants would not adequately support the staff and carry out their job duties, but called this perspective "naïve in hindsight" because the four Pathways participants who have secured DSD jobs have proven to be capable and valued members of the workforce.

In 2012, DSD leadership ultimately chose to participate in Pathways because it was attracted by the prospect of receiving EPTA payments for each Pathways participant the DSD hired, and the internships enabled staff to observe whether the job was a suitable placement. Faced with budget constraints in recent years, the DSD reportedly was forced to reduce its operating budget

by \$80 million over a six-year period to address budget shortfalls. The EPTA payments created a new line of funding that offset the salary costs of Pathways participants hired into permanent positions. As of the end of 2016, the DSD had claimed \$32,444 in EPTA payments. Although the EPTA covers only a portion of participants' salaries, DSD leadership was happy to have the participants' help that they otherwise would not have had due to budget constraints.

DSD leadership was attracted to the paid internships because they allowed staff to observe firsthand an intern's skills and contributions in the workplace and assess whether the placement could be a good fit. DSD leadership appreciated having the option to not hire the intern if his/her abilities were not compatible with the requirements of the position.³ When asked if the internships were an attractive feature of the program, one respondent said, "We had a choice throughout the whole process, and the fact that we could say 'yes' or 'no' was important. [The Pathways initiative] was new and a risk for us so having a choice was important" when deciding to move forward with the initiative.

EXPERIENCES HOSTING PATHWAYS INTERNS AND HIRING THEM AS EMPLOYEES

Experiences hosting interns

Between 2013 and the end of 2016, the DSD hosted 22 Pathways participants in 26 internships and extended 11 job offers to 10 participants. Four of these participants worked in customized internships, four in standard internships, one in an adapted internship, and one in both a hybrid and a standard internship (each resulting in a job offer from the DSD).⁴ The internships ranged from 1 to 25 weeks, although four internships ended early and were not completed (Table 1). Pathways participants have worked as interns at Head Start programs and several schools and have provided support to the information technology (IT) and printing services departments. The types of support interns have provided to schools and departments is diverse; their internship titles have included teacher assistant, library assistant, media center assistant, physical education assistant, tutor, assistant maintenance engineer, facilities maintenance worker, receptionist, office

this page

³ PARC establishes signed agreements with each employer partner at three points in the process, to clarify the roles and responsibilities of each entity as they relate to their participation in Pathways. First, employers review and sign the Partnership Agreement when they decide to collaborate with Pathways which communicates, among other things, that the employer will provide internship opportunities that lead to employment opportunities for Pathways participants. Second, employers sign an Internship Agreement acknowledging that they will work with PARC to identify jobs with employment potential for Pathways participants at the end of the internship period. Lastly, employers sign an Employment Agreement describing their responsibilities when they hire Pathways participants as permanent employees.

⁴ Pathways interns can participate in any of four types of internships: standard, adapted, customized, and hybrid. Standard internships are existing jobs. Adapted internships entail the carving away of duties in an existing job that are barriers to a participant to achieve a suitable match between the job and the participant's interests and abilities. Customized internships are those in which a nonstandard job is established and the job duties are defined based on Pathways staff negotiations with the employer to structure the job in ways that maximize a particular intern's productivity. Hybrid internships are non-negotiated customized jobs, meaning the employer's standard practice is to customize job tasks to maximize the productivity of any employee (Livermore et al. 2016).

Table 1

Characteristics of Davis School District internships (n = 26) obtained through Pathways

Internship measures	Minimum	Maximum	Average
Number of internships per participant	1.0	2.0	1.2
Number of hours worked per week	5.3	31.9	18.5
Number of weeks per internship	1.0	25.0	10.8
Number of hours of on-site support provided by Pathways staff ^a	1.0	129.3	48.6

Source: Pathways MIS data through January 2017.

^aIncludes one ongoing internship.

Davis School District's experience with Pathways at a glance

• **26** internships hosted



• **11** paid jobs offered to interns



• **4** interns hired into paid jobs



• **\$32,444** in EPTA payments received through December 2016

assistant, printing technician, data technician, and computer technician.

Most employees, particularly new hires, bring some risk to an organization because their productivity on the job is not yet known; they may demonstrate poor performance, which can be costly to manage; or the staff person may leave their position after completing their training. The DSD staff we spoke with expressed a general willingness to host Pathways interns, even though it might not lead to successful placements, because so few risks were involved; the DSD could opt out if the Pathways intern's interests, skills, or abilities were not a suitable match for the position. One DSD staff person pointed out that Pathways participants can try a job and see if the job duties and work conditions are a good fit, at no cost to the employer. This respondent also valued the flexibility the Pathways program offers to employers during the internship period. For example, one internship was scheduled for two weeks, lasted one week, and ended in a job offer to the participant. Another internship was scheduled to last 8 weeks but was extended to 24 weeks. Of the 13 internships extended beyond their agreed length of time, 9 ended in a job offer. In total, the DSD hosted 22 Pathways participants in internships between 2013 and 2016 and extended 11 job offers. Four of the job offers were accepted and the interns now work in permanent positions. The other seven job offers were not accepted because the work hours did not suit the participants' needs and two interns decided they wanted to work with older adults rather than kids. When the DSD leadership chose to not extend job offers to some Pathways interns, this added more legitimacy to the partnership because staff

could see that the DSD would only hire Pathways interns who fit well in the workplace.

Two DSD staff members spoke of how the internships were a period of adjustment for the participants, supervisors, and co-workers and an opportune time to observe whether the intern's interests and talents were a good match for the position. For example, one participant with ASD slowly adjusted to the workplace environment and his new colleagues over several weeks. At first, the participant was uncomfortable because his workplace and colleagues were unfamiliar to him. He did not speak with staff he did not know, and he used gestures and other nonverbal communication to express himself. Pathways staff worked alongside this person during the first couple of weeks to develop his social skills and help him successfully onboard to his position. At the end of his internship, this participant was offered a permanent position; he reportedly transformed over time into a confident and social team member who thrives when interacting with colleagues, so much so that he volunteers to deliver all the print jobs to staff working in his building.

Experiences hiring Pathways participants

As of December 2016, four interns had secured permanent DSD jobs. Three of the hired interns work about 30 hours per week and receive fringe benefits such as health insurance and optional 401k benefits (Table 2). These participants also received a nominal amount of job supports from Pathways staff during their first 90 days of employment, ranging from 1.5 total hours to 17 hours of on-the-job supports. The fourth hired intern

Table 2**Characteristics of Davis School District jobs obtained through Pathways**

Employed participant	Date of hire	Employment Measures				
		Number of months at job	Hourly wage	Monthly gross wage ^a	Fringe benefits ^b	Career cluster
1	August 2013	42	\$13.03	\$1,449	Yes	3 (Arts, A/V Technology, and Communications)
2	September 2016	4	\$11.31	\$833	No	5 (Education and training)
3	February 2016	11	\$12.81	\$1,421	Yes	5 (Education and training)
4	February 2014	35	\$16.21	\$1,912	Yes	11 (Information technology)

Source: Pathways MIS data through January 2017.

^aMonthly gross wages are from Pathways programmatic data submitted through November 2016, and exclude bonuses.

^bFringe benefits include health insurance and 401k.

works 17 hours per week and does not receive fringe benefits. This participant has worked in several internships; she did not receive any job supports from Pathways staff during her first 90 days of employment in her most recent position.

Although the Pathways participants often were hired into newly created positions, they required few accommodations. For example, one employed participant is allowed to take longer breaks when needed. Two Pathways participants use public transit to travel to and from work; Pathways staff currently drive the third participant to and from work, and a relative of the fourth participant drives him to work each day. All four participants work a set schedule.

Two DSD staff members we met with said that the skills and abilities of many Pathways participants have exceeded their expectations. One interviewee initially had reservations about having Pathways staff support the printing services group because it is a busy department that handles copying, printing, binding, and lamination for all 150 DSD schools and departments. In addition, staff use complex, computerized equipment that is not intuitive. The respondent was open to hosting a Pathways intern but questioned whether a person with a severe disability could be accommodated in the workplace. She noted that her preconceived

notions about workers with disabilities were wrong and this individual's strengths, such as his photographic memory, high attention to detail, and dependability, have brought significant value to the department. Initially, she trained this person to shrink-wrap packages. After he mastered this task and adjusted to the workplace, his confidence grew and he took the initiative to complete more tasks, which allowed him to expand his role in the department. For example, he is now responsible for entering data from all handwritten invoices into the computer to be transmitted to the accounting department. His supervisor checks his work, which usually is error free. Since joining the department, he has been trained to complete all job tasks and has become a great asset to the team.

All three DSD staff members with whom we spoke described how Pathways participants bring tremendous value to the organization. These placements have been successful in part because each participant's job is closely aligned with the "conditions of success" revealed through the Discovery process, and their job duties build on their core competencies and past work experiences (Table 3). For example, one participant is proficient in computer programming through past coursework and training. His conditions for success included working independently, receiving frequent feedback, and working the daytime shift

Table 3**Characteristics of Pathways participants hired by the Davis School District**

Employed participant	Educational and work experience	Skills/certifications	Conditions for success
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High school graduate Completed the Students Transitioning to Adult Responsibilities post-secondary Volunteered in schools, the retail sector, and small businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data entry Typing Using office equipment Proficient at using computers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small work group Monday–Friday work schedule Familiar co-workers Desires verbal instructions and modeling
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High school graduate Attended applied technology college Completed a service mission Worked in retail, genealogy, child care, and human resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data entry Filing Research Customer service Inventory Receptionist Credential verification CPR certified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular routines Social interaction Flexible breaks Familiar co-workers
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteered in elementary schools Completed a service mission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Certified Zumba instructor Proficient at using computers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monday–Friday work schedule Restricted access to food Ability to take breaks from sitting Desires verbal instructions and modeling Advance notice of changes in job duties
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High school graduate More than 2,500 hours of education and training in computer programming and drafting Experience as data technician in DSD IT department 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experience with SQL, Java/HTML, Auto CAD, SolidWorks, and MS Office suite Installing hardware Programming using “Clean Scripts” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work hours that align with public transit schedules Specialized keyboard Frequent feedback Independent work

Source: Participant’s visual resumes developed by Pathways staff during Discovery.

in an accessible work environment. While working in the IT department, he writes SQL scripts to respond to ad hoc requests and also creates forms so that DSD staff can run reports from the school district’s databases. His position meets all his conditions for success and leverages the skills he has honed through his extensive coursework. One DSD staff person remarked that this person

was “successful from the get-go” and described him as a “diamond in the rough,” noting his technical skills and productivity have exceeded expectations. This staff member also spoke highly of the participant’s strong work ethic, which has reportedly influenced his co-workers to improve their own work effort and productivity.

.....
"It [Pathways] has opened our eyes to the fact that people with disabilities can function and be successful. . . . A lot of people would say we'd welcome somebody with a disability, but in reality you go in with fear. This experience has eased that fear and speculation."
.....

—DSD staff member
.....

Another Pathways participant volunteered in the past with elementary school students. After he joined Pathways, he sought a position working five days a week in a setting where he received verbal instructions, training, and comprehensive workplace accommodations. Through Pathways, the participant obtained employment as a teacher's assistant in a local elementary school. When asked to rate his satisfaction with the participant's job performance on a scale of 1 to 10, his direct supervisor rated his performance as a 10, the highest level of satisfaction, because he is reliable, productive, personable, and receptive to feedback, noting that his performance has improved over time. The Pathways participants are productive staff members, and they have successfully integrated into their respective departments.

DAVIS SCHOOL DISTRICT STAFF MEMBERS' SATISFACTION WITH PATHWAYS

.....

All three staff members with whom we spoke viewed the Pathways to Careers program positively. One staff person noted that the education Pathways staff provided to interns' supervisors and co-workers before the start of the internship contributed to a successful placement. Before each internship began, Pathways staff educated the direct supervisor and co-workers about the participant's work-related experiences, skills, and what works well for that person in the workplace setting. This upfront education prepared the rest of the staff for what to expect when working with each individual, including any special needs that might require a reasonable accommodation to help that person carry out their job duties.⁵

At the start of the internship, Pathways staff work side by side with participants to help them assimilate to their roles and job duties. Pathways staff gradually reduce the level of support they provide to participants, "fading out" as these participants adjust to their workplace, colleagues, and new job responsibilities. Knowing that Pathways staff were available to provide support at the start of each internship helped ease any concerns that DSD staff had about working with someone with a significant disability. Another DSD staff person praised the support Pathways staff provided to help address minor issues that arose in the workplace during the early phases of employment.

DSD staff also spoke of how Pathways participants have positively influenced their organization by raising awareness about the value workers with disabilities can bring to the organization. One staff person said that having a Pathways participant work directly with the students in the elementary school has benefited the students because they see that people with disabilities can be productive and are valued staff members. This respondent also emphasized the importance of giving Pathways participants the freedom to learn and grow in their positions.

PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVE

.....

We interviewed three Pathways participants, who were hired as permanent employees in February 2014, February 2016, and September 2016, to gain their perspectives on their internships and experiences working in the DSD. The first participant spoke positively about the Pathways program, referring to it as "a blessing." He enjoys his work and aspires to work full-time in the future. Before joining Pathways, he took classes at Davis Applied Technology College in computer programming, but he had not worked in the past. After completing Discovery, this individual began his 12-week internship with the DSD in October 2013. At the beginning of his internship, Pathways staff helped him improve his speed to complete tasks; since then, however, he has needed minimal support. When his internship ended in February 2014, he was offered a part-time position working 30 hours per week on average in the IT department. His colleagues view him as highly talented and possessing a strong work ethic. When asked if he had any recommendations for improving the program, he suggested that Pathways participants and their families meet with their future supervisors before starting an internship. He conveyed that some family members may be overprotective or have questions about the internship. Opening up a line of communication may help families feel more comfortable about the opportunity.

Before applying to the Pathways program, the second participant had volunteered at an elementary school and worked in PARC's day training and facility-based employment program for adults with disabilities. He began his internship as a teacher's assistant in an elementary school in September 2015, about one month after completing Discovery. Teacher's

this page

⁵ The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of a disability. One provision under the ADA requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations that "enable the employment of qualified individuals with disabilities" (Rothstein 2015). Reasonable accommodations can include (among other things) making facilities accessible, job restructuring, reduced or modified work schedules, or modification of equipment or devices needed to perform one's job duties.

.....
"The district is helping people with disabilities who would encounter challenges finding employment elsewhere. Seeing the difference we've made in these kids' lives. . . . Would he be able to find employment that's steady that he could stay at for 20 years? It's benefited all of us because we're helping them out, but on the flip side we're getting quality employees. . . . and it's an overall good deal for everyone involved."

.....
—DSD staff member
.....

assistant jobs are typically 17.5 hours per week, but the flexibility of the internship allowed this individual to take on additional roles helping in the library and in the media center and helping students with disabilities improve their reading. The participant also works on the playground during recess and during physical education classes, which increased his schedule to 29 hours each week. He was offered a permanent position after his internship ended, and he maintains the same job responsibilities. The participant enjoys interacting with students and his colleagues on the job. Although his main motivation is working with children, he conveyed that earning a paycheck is also important to him; he is saving to go on a cruise during spring break.

The third participant joined Pathways in 2013 after learning about the program from her vocational rehabilitation counselor. This individual applied because she wanted to receive help finding and keeping a job. Her mother reported that Pathways staff helped to "pin down which skills and strengths she had...as opposed to the things that she thought she wanted to do and then found out later were too hard." Since joining Pathways, the participant has worked in six internships in a variety of roles, including interning in the DSD as a receptionist and as a teacher's assistant at an elementary school. Her internship as a receptionist ended early after five weeks because the job duties were too difficult. In her most recent position, she was hired as a permanent employee as a teacher's assistant at an elementary school. She enjoys her work, especially interacting with students in the after-school program.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE DAVIS SCHOOL DISTRICT'S EXPERIENCE WITH PATHWAYS

.....

When reflecting on the development of the Pathways partnership with the DSD, respondents offered four lessons that might inform program staff's efforts to help participants access integrated employment and build their networks of participating employers who are critical to the overall success of the Pathways program.

Paid internships and EPTA were key factors in deciding to collaborate with Pathways. DSD respondents conveyed that the paid internships and EPTA payments were key factors in DSD's decision to collaborate with

Pathways. The internships provided a no-risk way for staff to observe Pathways participants' ability to support the DSD and revealed the degree of compatibility between the participant's interests, skills, and abilities and the requirements of the position. The internships also helped ease staffing constraints when the DSD encountered staff shortages. The prospect of receiving EPTA payments was also a key factor in the DSD's decision to partner with Pathways because the payments created a new line of funding to help address budget constraints. As of the end of 2016, the district had claimed \$32,444 in EPTA payments, which offset the costs of Pathways participants' salaries after they were hired into permanent positions.

An optimal job match occurs when a participant's talents fill an organizational need.

The four participants hired as permanent employees in the DSD possess talents and strengths that address a need in the organization. Each participant's core competencies and skills aligned with the requirements of the position they filled, allowing them to thrive in their role and to demonstrate value to the staff with whom they work. In some cases, the job match is not always perfect in the beginning, but an optimal job match can occur when co-workers are willing to make some adaptations. Whenever an intern or employee starts to work in an organization, there is a transition period during which the new intern or employee adjusts to his or her new position, colleagues, and the norms in the workplace. Flexibility and patience on the part of the staff are reportedly key to facilitating a successful placement. When asked what they would tell an employer who is considering hiring people with disabilities, one DSD staff member said, "Find a fit and a need, and be patient.

Allow the process to have some time to see if it's successful. . . . Don't bring them in with minimal expectations; they can do a lot more than we think they can. On occasion, if it is not a perfect fit, then maybe there is somewhere else in your company where it will be. Flexibility is critical."

Two former Pathways participants who have secured permanent DSD employment have achieved greater financial independence.

DSD extended job offers to two Pathways participants in 2013 and 2014, and both individuals have since achieved greater financial independence. The former Pathways participants received federal disability benefits

in the past, and transitioned off benefits after becoming employed because each had earned substantial wages for a sustained period of time, making them ineligible for these benefits.⁶ Both participants enjoy a rich benefits package, including health coverage and 401k benefits.

Employers should be open to the possibility of hiring workers with disabilities.

We asked DSD staff what they would tell other employers that are approached to participate in Pathways or are considering hiring people with disabilities. One respondent said that Pathways offers employers “an opportunity to add to your business at minimal risk” and that hiring Pathways participants “will add to the positive culture” in the organization. DSD staff believe that Pathways participants have become productive and valued members of its workforce, and these successful placements have opened people’s minds to the possibility of hiring people with disabilities.

CONCLUSION

In recent years, federal policies and initiatives have emphasized integrated community employment for people with disabilities, especially those with intellectual or developmental disabilities. The Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act, signed into law in 2000, states the goals of independence, productivity, and inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in all facets of community life. The 1999 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Olmstead v. L.C.* emphasizes integrated employment as the preferred outcome for people with severe disabilities and prohibits the unnecessary institutionalization and segregation of people with disabilities. In response to the *Olmstead* ruling, many states have expanded the capacity of their community-based service systems, established *Olmstead* plans, and begun to examine the role of sheltered workshops, which often employ people with intellectual or developmental disabilities at subminimum wages in segregated settings.⁷ The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, passed by Congress in 2014, is also transforming the public workforce system and improving access to workforce services for people with disabilities and preparing them for competitive integrated employment (U.S. Department of Labor 2014).

In addition to these federal policies, the concept of Employment First has spread to support the full inclusion of people with the most significant

disabilities in the workplace and community. Under this principle, integrated employment in a community-based work setting is the first option for providing employment services to youth and adults with significant disabilities (U.S. Office of Disability Employment Policy 2013). Thirty-two states have an official Employment First policy in place tied to legislation or a policy directive making integrated employment a priority goal for people with intellectual or developmental disabilities (Butterworth et al. 2013; Hoff 2016). The remaining states have Employment First efforts and initiatives under way but no official Employment First policy (Hoff 2016).

The Pathways to Careers program is an avenue for adults with severe disabilities to secure competitive integrated employment, which is a key objective of the system change efforts under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and Employment First. As we have observed firsthand through Pathways, not only does working increase individuals’ self-confidence and self-esteem, but work that is meaningful and competitive also can increase individuals’ financial independence and help ensure their full inclusion in the workplace and broader community. Pathways promises to continue expanding its reach as enrollment grows in the three sites that were launched in 2015.

REFERENCES

- Butterworth, John, Allison Cohen Hall, Frank A. Smith, Alberto Migliori, Jean Winsor, Daria Domin, and Jennifer Sulewski. “State Data: The National Report on Employment Services and Outcomes.” Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts, Boston, Institute for Community Inclusion, 2013. Available at http://www.communityinclusion.org/article.php?article_id=323.
- Hoff, David. “Employment First Resource List.” Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts, Boston, Institute for Community Inclusion, May 2016. Available at <http://apse.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/SELN-Employment-First-Resource-List-May-2016.pdf>.
- Leffel, Timothy, Steven Snow, and Nathan Lee. “Comprehensive Annual Financial Report of the Davis School District for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2016.” Available at <http://www.davis.k12.ut.us/cms/lib09/UT01001306/Centricity/Domain/4/CAFR2016.pdf>.

this page

⁶ Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) beneficiaries can take advantage of a nine-month trial work period, during which the beneficiary receives full SSDI benefits, regardless of the amount of monthly earnings, as long as the beneficiary reports his or her work activity and has a disabling impairment. After the beneficiary completes his or her trial work period, the Social Security Administration (SSA) evaluates the beneficiary’s work and earnings to determine whether he or she can work at the substantial gainful activity (SGA) level. If the SSA determines that substantial work is occurring, the beneficiary is not entitled to receive SSDI benefits for months in which earnings are more than the SGA level, which is \$1,170 per month in gross earnings in 2017 for a nonblind individual (Social Security Administration 2016). Pathways participants receive benefit counseling from their local work incentives planning and assistance counselor to help them understand how wages earned during an internship or permanent employment will affect their federal disability benefits or medical benefits (Marc Gold and Associates 2015).

⁷ According to the U.S. Department of Justice (2011), “An *Olmstead* plan is a public entity’s plan for implementing its obligation to provide individuals with disabilities opportunities to live, work, and be served in integrated settings.” The plan must reflect an analysis of the extent to which the public entity is providing services in the most integrated setting and must contain concrete commitments to expand integrated opportunities.

Livermore, Gina, Maura Bardos, and Hannah Burak. "The Utah Pathways to Careers Demonstration: Interim Evaluation Report." Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, March 2016.

Marc Gold and Associates. *Pathways to Careers Guidebook*. Ocean Springs, MS: MG&A, June 2015.

Rothstein, Mark A. "Innovations of the Americans with Disabilities Act: Confronting Disability Discrimination in Employment." *Journal of the American Medical Association*, vol. 313, no. 22, June 9, 2015.

Social Security Administration. *2016 Red Book: A Summary Guide to Employment Supports for Persons with Disabilities Under the SSDI and SSI Programs*. Baltimore, MD: SSA, 2016. Available at <https://www.ssa.gov/redbook/documents/TheRedBook2016.pdf>.

U.S. Department of Justice. "Statement of the Department of Justice on Enforcement of the Integration Mandate of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and *Olmstead v. L.C.*" Washington, DC: DOJ, June 22, 2011. Available at http://www.ada.gov/olmstead/q&a_olmstead.htm.

U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. "The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act – July 22, 2014." Washington DC: DOL, 2014. Available at [<https://www.doleta.gov/WIOA/Docs/WIOA-Factsheet.pdf>].

U.S. Office of Disability Employment Policy. "Employment First." Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor, 2013. Available at <http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/EmploymentFirst.htm>.

This case study was prepared by Noelle Denny-Brown and Marisa Shenk, Mathematica Policy Research, under contract with SourceAmerica (INST-200901).

