

# EMPLOYMENT TRAINING SERVICE CHANGES

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### Introduction

To support the needs of adults who are developmentally disabled, the government of Alberta has established the Persons with Developmental Disabilities division within the Department of Community and Social Services.

The department contracts with approximately 150 agencies across the province to deliver employment training services to these adults. Columbia College is one of the agencies contracted to provide employment training services. The college has been providing these services for some 30 years.

During the last thirty years, Columbia College has assisted some 600 clients to achieve competitive, independent employment. To be competitively, independently employed means these clients are working in industry, have been performing regular duties without daily agency support for a period of at least three months, and are receiving at least minimum wage. Clients tend to also receive about 4 hours per month of employment support from agency staff in order to help them sustain employment.

Table 'A' indicates the number of clients served as well as the number of clients competitively, independently employed by Columbia College over the past ten years. It also indicates the cost for providing these services over this period, and the cost per individual client.

#### Table 'A'

Number of clients served in ten years	300
Cost for delivery of services during this period	\$7,000,000
Number of clients competitively independently employed	250
Overall cost per client served	\$28,000

Table 'B' is a hypothetical agency. It indicates the same cost for delivery of services over the same period of time. It assumes clients were provided with the same employment training services but none of the clients actually achieved competitive independent employment as defined above.

#### Table 'B'

Number of clients served in ten years	30
Cost for delivery of services during this period	\$7,000,000
Number of clients competitively independently employed	0
Overall cost per client served	\$233,000

The cost figures in both tables are not exact numbers. They are presented for illustration purpose. By comparing the two tables, it becomes clear that clients who receive training for employment and then are placed in competitive independent employment positions save the government a considerable amount of money when viewed over a longer period of time. This type of success has also been reported in a published study by Robert E. Cimera. It is titled, National Cost Efficiency of Supported Employees with Intellectual Disabilities: 2002 to 2007. This study is reported in the January 2010 issue of the American Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

Table 'A' presents a much more cost efficient approach to providing services than Table 'B' (i.e. \$28,000 per client vs. \$233,000 per client). It is also a much more effective and more meaningful approach for those clients who are able to work competitively, are ready for competitive independent employment, and who are willing to work in industry.

## **Problem/Challenge**

Of the 9,000 clients served by agencies across the province, it is estimated that less than 100, or about 1.2 percent obtained competitive independent employment in 2008. However, it is believed that more than 1,000 or about 12 percent of these clients are capable of competitive independent employment. This indicates a lot of clients who are capable of being competitively independently employed remain in employment training programs much longer than may be necessary. If these 1,000 clients had been competitively independently employed for the last ten years then the government would have saved over 150 million dollars during this period, or at least 15 million annually. So, how do we get more of these clients competitively independently employed each year?

## **Solution**

First, the government needs to financially reward agencies that successfully place clients in competitive independent employment by paying the agency fifty percent of what they save the department. This will enable the agency to pay more competitive wages. It will also encourage all agencies to move in this direction.

Second, the government needs to help agencies so they can develop better employment training programs.

Third, agencies providing employment training should report the number of adults they were able to competitively independently employ each month. They should also report what percentage this was of the total number of adults receiving employment training services. This recommendation would be an example of the Minister's commitment to improving the department's efficiency and effectiveness.

## **Outcome/Results**

As a result of adopting the solutions listed above the following outcomes will be achieved.

1. Agencies, who place clients in competitive independent employment, will receive more government funding which will enable that agency to pay higher wages and thereby attract and retain more qualified employees.
2. Guardians will be pleased that clients will receive better employment training services.
3. At least 12 percent of all clients will be competitively independently employed.
4. Those clients who are competitively independently employed will make an economic contribution to society and as a result may feel more personally satisfied.
5. In the next 10 years, the government will save up to 75,000,000 dollars by adopting this initiative and agencies will receive a similar amount of dollars by getting clients competitively independently employed.
6. This will be a win-win-win solution in which clients, guardians, agencies, and the government will all win.