

**CALIFORNIA'S
COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY
TO IMPROVE THE EMPLOYMENT RATE OF
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES:
STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES**

A Report for:

the California Health Incentives Improvement Project

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I. BACKGROUND

In early 2005, the Governor's Committee on the Employment of People with Disabilities issued the first draft of a Comprehensive Strategy, as called for under Assembly Bill 925. In conjunction with the California Health Incentives Improvement Project (CHIIP), the Governor's Committee launched an aggressive effort to solicit public input into the Comprehensive Strategy by advertising that it was posted to a public website and asking stakeholders to review it and offer comments. It also took testimony at its Spring and Summer public meetings.

Both organizations were committed to building a Comprehensive Strategy around evidence-based practices and extensive input from people with disabilities, their families, employers, service providers, and other stakeholders during the 2005 calendar year. The comment solicitation recognized that the "complexity of coordinating programs administered at State and local levels by government, education, and community-based organizations requires a comprehensive strategy that is clearly and universally articulated. California must use a comprehensive strategy across multiple employment, healthcare and support services to impact employment outcomes for people with disabilities, especially as we acknowledge the continuum and diversity of disability in our society."

The input solicitation went on to declare that the Comprehensive Strategy will:

- Support the goals of equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living and economic self-sufficiency for people with disabilities that will bring adults with disabilities into gainful employment at a rate that is as close as possible to that of the general adult population;
- Ensure that State government is a model employer of persons with disabilities; and
- Support State coordination with, and participation in, benefits planning training and information dissemination projects supported by private and federal grants.

In March of 2005, the CHIIP leadership, in consultation with the Governor's Committee staff, decided to augment the public comment on the Comprehensive Strategy by launching three additional sets of stakeholder input collection activities. The CHIIP wanted to organize a series of informal, non-scientific-based focus groups, host an online discussion group with people with disabilities, and conduct key informant interviews of human resource professionals knowledgeable in Return to Work strategies for injured workers. To assist in these additional stakeholder input sessions, CHIIP also engaged Western University's Center on Disability Issues and the Health Professions (CDIHP) to handle the logistics of the focus groups, conduct the key informant interviews, and complete this stakeholder input report.

This report does not reflect, or in any way include, any comments on the Comprehensive Strategy received directly by the Governor's Committee at public hearings or through its website. That data was not available, and would have been well beyond the scope of this project. Rather, this report addresses the three additional stakeholder input groupings supported directly by the CHIIP, at times in concert with the Governor's Committee.

It should be noted that the Comprehensive Strategy that was "on the street" during the bulk of this stakeholder input process was the initial Strategy released in April of 2005 and revised that November. By the time of the third, more substantive draft Strategy released in mid-December, all stakeholder input sessions had come to a close.

Initially, CDIHP developed an interview protocol that could be used for the key informant interviews, and was adapted for use in most of the informal focus groups. The Governor's Committee had a shorter set of questions that it began using in informal focus groups it began to host as well. Both sets of questions were geared toward soliciting opinions about barriers and successes around employment of people with disabilities. They were not geared directly to the draft Comprehensive Strategy.

Human Resource Key Contact Interviews: Beginning with a list from an experienced human resource disability management specialist, CDIHP attempted to contact employers, businesses and business consultants to be key contacts, representing the business/employer segment for input into the Comprehensive Strategy. These first contacts led to others and those led to more. Some of the original interviewees also recommended other individuals that were contacted, screened and a few interviewed. Gaps in representation were noted and other contacts from both past Governor's Committee members, local and state boards and contacts of contractor and/or CHIIP staff were contacted for interviews and/or recommendations.

Over 100 contacts were made or attempted to identify and screen for the final 10 individuals to be interviewed. Brenda Premo, director of CDIHP and former director of the California Department of Rehabilitation, conducted all 10 interviews, each of which was a 1.5 hour telephone phone interviews. Each interview was taped with permission; tapes were then transcribed and used for this report. Interviews were conducted with:

- a small business owner and CA Small Business Network Coordinator;
- a consultant and mediator with health care businesses and occupational health (WC) issues with other businesses;
- a consultant with large companies and medium size companies (e.g. HP, Levi etc)
- a consultant with insurance companies;
- a consultant with large companies;

- a director of a small business resource center;
- a chief of occupational health at a major hospital;
- a chief financial officer at a large disability agency with prior experience with one of the big four accounting/consulting firms;
- a senior counselor with the Department of Rehabilitation who has a high job placement record; and,
- an human resources director for large to medium software and hardware companies.

A complete list of interviewees and affiliations appears in Appendix A. All interviewees were promised confidentiality, so no names are used in this report.

Two Virtual Classroom Sessions The California Foundation for Independent Living Centers (CFILC) offered to host some stakeholder input sessions using its online “virtual classroom” as a means of efficiently collecting input directly from people with disabilities and CFILC members. This new technology provided for live interactive web based electronic classroom sessions for up to 17 sites per session, in addition to a line for the presenter and another one or two sites for accommodations like interpreters for the deaf or hard of hearing and/or descriptive listening narrative for blind or low vision participants. Each site was able to have between two and five participants viewing the computer screen and listening via phone conference lines to the presenters. Both on line chat functions and phone conversations via the conference line were available to each site.

The first virtual classroom session was held on Thursday, July 28, 2005 with 12 sites connected and 24 participants registered. The second session was held on Wednesday, August 3, 2005 with 15 sites connected and 33 participants registered. Participants for sites were primarily advocacy and disability service agencies, including many independent living centers, the World Institute on Disability’s California Work Incentives Work Group members, and the Department of Rehabilitation’s Bridges Transition Project sites.

Informal Focus Groups: In addition to these two groupings of stakeholders, the CHIP and Governor’s Committee staff wanted to reach out to other targeted groups for input into the Comprehensive Strategy. In all, 12 informal focus groups were conducted, with participants either being selectively recruited to participate or being a captive audience of an existing program or site. Some of the targeted groups recruited into these informal focus groups included employers, labor union and apprenticeship programs, veterans and youth and family members. There were, however, two open-ended forums---one held at a regional disability employment conference sponsored by the Department of Labor and the other a consumer-organized conference known as Respectability--that also offered opportunities for input using this methodology.

Finally, this report is intended to be used as an independent reference by the Governor's Committee, the CHIIP, or any other parties interested in understanding how the collection of individuals queried feel about the Comprehensive Strategy and the employment of youth and adults with disabilities more generally. It is also intended to be folded into a comprehensive report as supporting documentation that CHIIP needs to submit to its funder, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. There are two helpful appendices to this report, one that lists the individuals and groups participating in this data collection process, and the other a much more detailed list of summarized comments organized by the categories of the Comprehensive Strategy outline.

II. STAKEHOLDER INPUT: EMERGENT THEMES

Across the three stakeholder input categories, certain themes emerged. This section will report on those major themes, oftentimes in the words of the stakeholders themselves.

A. Expectations & Attitudes

One of the major themes that emerged from all three types of stakeholder input sessions revolves around expectations and attitudes. While on its face, this theme may seem simple, stakeholders raised issues and concerns about expectations and attitudes in ways that demonstrate a great deal of complexity.

Low expectations; for example, was identified as a significant issue for employers, for service providers, for family members, and for people with disabilities themselves. In other words, it is insufficient to think that people with disabilities are not being hired because employers alone have low expectations when, as the stakeholders point out, nearly everyone someone with a disability comes into contact with has low expectations of them, and the person with a disability has low self-esteem and internalizes all of these negative reinforcements.

In one open forum, a participant said that "we need to have high expectations for people with disabilities," while another in the same forum said people with disabilities "should not settle for 'whatever.'" One consumer advocate went so far as to refer to "the soft bigotry of low expectations of employers" when asked what obstacles people with disabilities face in the workplace.

"People with disabilities should be prepared to fail," stated a consumer advocate in the same forum, while another declared that "we need higher expectations of ourselves." These comments parallel years of research and advocacy around disability public policy, especially in education and employment.

The issue of attitudes elicited a great deal of emotion, conjecture and hypotheses from many of the stakeholder participants.

People with disabilities “need to get out of their own way; they need to help themselves,” one employer stated in a focus group while another in the same setting confirmed that “people with disabilities come with attitudes.” Some people with disabilities have the attitude that “they are going to take care of us and I don’t have to worry about (anything). They’ll do it for me,” said one employer interviewed, “if you coddle people then you are taking away their ability to help themselves.”

“Attitude is a very big barrier, a very costly barrier,” said another employer. “But the person’s own anxiety, fears, anger can be a barrier to success.” And, for injured workers, “fear and sensitivity to losing contact with the workplace is a huge factor,” said one worker’s compensation consultant. “People’s feelings are really, really hurt when they don’t hear from their employer.”

“Unfortunately a good number of employers have negative experiences because there are so many people that take advantage” of them, explained a human resources manager. “People that truly may not be disabled and what we’re talking about now is maybe worker’s comp. So unfortunately some employers will have a hard time with, they are very suspicious I guess that’s probably it.” But in the cases where someone is “coming in already with an established disability that they’ve overcome, I notice that employers and managers tend to be more accepting and open.”

Yet, several consumer advocates or people with disabilities who participated in focus groups said that “we need to change employer attitudes,” when asked about barriers to employment. “Information about hiring the disabled must be brought to their attention so they are aware of the kind of good and loyal employees people with disabilities can make,” another focus group participant said.

As some stakeholders pointed out, issues about one’s disability are very personal and deep-rooted. One employer explained that the obstacle of attitudes about disability “is sort of a cultural problem.” In American society, “we don’t like to be impaired ourselves. We don’t like contending with our own losses of capacities and we don’t like it in other people either.”

Similarly, one disability employment specialist reinforced the point, “when we have shortcomings we find it very uncomfortable and we don’t like everything that ensues from even those temporary shortcomings. There is a kind of an undercurrent of negativity that I don’t think the most stellar commission on the planet could really overhaul this human nature problem.” She went on to say that “I think that leadership can help influence it so that it is not such a big factor.”

In response to how these attitudinal issues should be addressed, several participants in all three stakeholder groupings said that people should “focus on

ability” or “recognize abilities rather than disabilities” or “we need to look for abilities and be open-minded.” One participant summed it up by saying that “I wish we could just use common sense, courtesy, and sensitivity with everyone!”

B. Disability Awareness & Sensitivity Training

Stakeholders seemed to believe that a lot of the negative attitudes and low expectations could be addressed by individual, group and very broad disability education and awareness training. Many stakeholders even called for a state-sponsored public relations campaign, through Public Service Announcements, to help educate the general public and create a different societal view of people with disabilities.

One employer pointed out that businesses “need employees to hire” as another in a different setting said that he needed “qualified employees” to fill positions. “Companies can’t discriminate in this job market,” an employer said, speaking positively of the economic necessities of finding good employees.

One independent living center director said that “employers need education about disability issues so they don’t discriminate when people with disabilities disclose their disabilities.” Employers need to be sure that they “don’t make assumptions, such as understanding that Cerebral Palsy does not equate to mental retardation” said another disability community advocate.

“Our people don’t know disability etiquette,” said one mid-level manager in the private sector. “We don’t want to hurt anyone’s feelings by asking the wrong questions,” expressed another employer. “We need to better understand the ranges of disability,” said another manager.

Training for managers was an issue that surfaced several times in each of the stakeholder input groupings. “Training for managers is really lacking,” one employer said. Another employer in the same focus group felt that “hiring managers need to learn how to work with people with disabilities.” There are “a lot of legal issues that cause trepidation for managers.”

An employment specialist felt that employers “need training to ease fear of litigation” while a disability rights advocate proposed that “employers receive education to correct misconceptions about people with disabilities.” One advocate suggested there was a strong need for “global awareness training for both sides – employers and people with disabilities.” And, another advocate proposed “public service announcements regarding people with disabilities to be run in primetime to help change perceptions” of the general public. The state needs to “conduct a major public relations campaign to educate employers about people with disabilities, including by using some of the more successful people with disabilities and by operationalizing it through employers and employer-based

associations” such as the Society for Human Resource Managers (SHRM) and Chambers of Commerce.

“It is important to remember that if they don’t know what to do, they are going to run,” said a disability employment specialist. “If they do know what to do, if they have been given some support from an HR person or someone like me, then they’re usually pretty happy to continue the process and honestly and sincerely evaluate the person’s ability to do the work. Most recruiters and frontline supervisors I don’t think have a big problem with disability as long as they understand what the impairment is and how it is going to match up with the productivity requirements.”

“I think the average person, and I honestly believe even HR, thinks about people who can’t use their limbs” when thinking about people with disabilities in the workplace, explained a human resources manager for a high technology company. “We all know that there is just a lot more to it than that, a lot more different degrees of disability... Because I’ve worked with people who have had sight and hearing problems and as a certified credit card industry we had blind people working as customer service people.”

“I think people are becoming more educated,” said a human resources manager, recounting a story about having to fire a woman with mental health needs after four or five serious episodes. “But I still think there are a lot of people that don’t know there are people out there that have some mild cases of bipolar and they probably have no idea” about other types of hidden disabilities.

“Our managers don’t know the definition of ‘reasonable’ for accommodations” said one employer, while another in the same dialogue admitted that his “managers don’t typically know unless someone asks for an accommodation.” The “costs of accommodations are just unknowns to businesses,” said an employment specialist. “If we can help them become better known, it may alleviate some of the concerns of smaller employers.” One employer said that he “started affinity groups, including with people with disabilities, to help identify and address accessibility issues.”

One employer very directly said that he believed the “definition of disability is vague.” One hospital employer cited Carpal Tunnel syndrome as an example of a condition that is used too loosely. “Most people who come in with arm symptoms actually do not have Carpal Tunnel syndrome,” she said. “It is really a sub categorization of what they may present with. Most of what we see is more soft tissue in nature. We see a fair amount of Carpal Tunnel syndrome referrals, but it’s not the automatic diagnosis. Carpal Tunnel specifically relates to damage of a specific nerve in the upper extremity, called the media nerve and some people have it but many people who present with problems don’t have it. So we deal primarily with people who have acute, and I would say subacute, work related musculoskeletal injury.”

Offering another perspective, one consumer advocate said that “we need to infuse humanity into human resources.”

“Smaller companies are more nervous about cost of accommodations” than larger companies, said one employer, “especially those companies without a human resources person or department.” Another employer said that “companies with fewer resources may be less knowledgeable about disability laws,” as a colleague from the same business explained that “companies need information on legal requirements, resources and human resources issues” around working with people with disabilities.

“There is a lot of misinformation about the costs of accommodations,” one employer expressed, citing examples such as people with disabilities missing work, health care costs, etc.”

“From a building perspective, I don’t think I’ve ever been in a building that doesn’t have access, if it’s at least two stories,” said the human resources manager. “So if a person comes in, you believe the business is now pretty much set up with their processes and procedures to provide the request.” In the cases “where there are really unique things, you know those are going to be typically in the beginning of your hiring process,” she continued. “I haven’t had anything that has required a lot of money where we couldn’t do it and so I haven’t been faced with that. I’ve put in access ramps; I’ve done things like that for years.”

“Education and outreach, it’s almost like it has to be ongoing, that just has to be continuous, so resources for those types of leads I think would be very, very important,” explained one disability employment specialist. “Speaking very candidly, we are in a society where small business, I mean they’ve got it coming at them in every direction and you know they’re worried they are going to get sued because they are not complying and they don’t know.”

In one of the employer focus groups, it was suggested that “on-line training needs to be offered for employers in short increments” because “every time you pull a manager off line, it costs the company money.”

“If I were Governor, I would want to get out more education and understanding about people, more visibility with people with disabilities because I think once people are sensitized more to it and understand it better, a lot of their fears drop off and they realize that this isn’t really rocket science to try and work with people with disabilities,” explained a human resources manager for a large corporation. “Its really a matter of understanding and being a little bit more open-minded, just like we have gotten at least in this state with minorities and women and whatever interest groups that have either been discriminated against, or been given the shaft through the years. If I had a budget I think I would put some toward

education and visibility, a strategy that would include that and we can talk about how to operationalize it through employers.”

Another employer said that “we need to show people solutions. It’s a matter of looking at success stories and showing people that here is how things can be done because I think that’s where a lot of the ignorance and bias comes from. They just assume that there are no solutions to people who have disabilities and that they can’t compete.” She continued, “I think, also, we have to take some of the people with disabilities that have really made it and get them out there on a road show.”

Throughout the stakeholder input sessions, there were a number of comments that addressed the needs of people with disabilities more generally that can be grouped into themes of education and training, career preparation and development, and connecting activities.

“I would do a big grassroots campaign,” one human resources manager for a large corporation said. “I would figure out how to have an open public forum, almost like a living room space for public forums, on some of the interlocking problems and opportunities for improvement in our state.”

“What can we do to understand each other better so we can recognize solutions quicker and implement them with more confidence and collaborate more effectively,” said the corporate human resources manager. “And that means people from different perspectives agreeing to sit down together expecting to hear differences and expecting some of those differences not to be reconciled by the end of the meeting.”

C. Education & Training

A fair amount of input across the three stakeholder sessions suggested, directly and indirectly, that people with disabilities are not receiving an adequate education. Some issues related to this section will also be raised under a later category, “Addressing the Needs of Business.”

An employer summed up the sentiment of several focus group members when he said that he believed “people with disabilities need a much better education” than they are currently getting.

“All employers need qualified employees to hire,” said one employer during a focus group while another added that “we are just looking for the best qualified person” to hire. A third, in the same focus group chimed in that “we look at the skill sets first. We review someone’s skills from resumes before talking to candidates,” and “you can tell who has the basic skills we need.”

An independent living center director who runs an employment program said that the people with disabilities he sees “need to develop and be able to articulate their skill sets,” suggesting that people with disabilities training in how to better sell themselves to prospective employers..

Consistent with decades of research, the sentiment of employers was summed up by one employer who flat out said that “people with disabilities need ‘soft skills.’” That is, one of the major issues constantly raised by employers is the inability of candidates with disabilities to dress appropriately, answer the telephone properly, greet customers and fellow employees properly, and other so-called “soft skills” essential to work in a business environment.

The importance of people with disabilities learning how to use computers and being educated for high technology-related positions was underscored by several employers, both in the focus groups and key informant interviews.

In another focus group, one large employer representative said that “our bottom line is ‘Do they have the skills?’” to do the job. “If so, everything else can be worked around.” Echoing that sentiment, another employer in the same focus group elaborated “candidates need the right skill set. For example, we see a lot of workers who are not trained for high tech jobs.” And, a non-high technology industry employer concurred by saying that “all applicants must be computer savvy.”

“I’m in a white collar environment, so there is less diversity (of employment opportunities) because it is going to be mostly educated people and so that’s why I say education in the high tech industry is critical,” explained one Silicon Valley-based employer. “When I say high tech, I mean software because even with hardware a lot of it is still white collar but there is manufacturing but a lot of that has been sent overseas.”

“High tech is obviously certainly a great place for people to be because of the cutting edge technology. Obviously the market here in Silicon Valley went bust a few years ago. But it’s picking up now,” she continued. “Having technical skills certainly is going to make you more employable... But, you know what is interesting is that I think there are great opportunities, but I don’t see that many disabled people in software. Because you’re setting at your desk---and now when I say disabled I would think from a paraplegic standpoint---it doesn’t matter if you can walk or not to do software, it doesn’t even matter if you can use any of your limbs because there are all kinds of accommodations,” like speech recognition programs.

Education and training are also major issues for people with disabilities already on disability income support programs. “When I run across folks who are already on SSDI or SSI---but largely SSDI---they are so often institutionalized in terms of what it took for them to get there, proving their level of impairment, that it is really

tough to move them back off that,” explained one worker’s compensation consultant who works with large employers. “I am not well versed enough to talk about how SSDI needs to reform. Hopefully they are doing a good job with the Tickets program and all of that. That in combination with building competency on the employer’s side should begin to bridge the barriers.” What is “important about working with different kinds of impairments, the diversity there, and once the SSDI recipient feels better about moving away from the institutionalized entity and becoming self supporting,” he continued, “I think we are going to see improvement of the employment of the disabled. I think we will see ADA coming more into what we originally had hoped for.”

“No matter how well prepared an applicant is, though, they still need the employer part of the equation,” he added. “I think those two work hand in hand. You bring the competency up and the incentives on both sides, and I think we are going to see improvements.”

One employer felt very strongly that “candidates must have adequate skills and be ready to accept rejection and keep going.” And, another called for “more of a partnership (between the education systems and employers) for employers to hire any kind of employee.”

Concern was also raised about inadequate support for the education system, rising costs and the quality of education being delivered. “About removing barriers and being Governor for a day,” one employer said, “My priorities would be on education costs and quality.”

One employer interviewed a month before last November’s contentious election, said that if she were Governor for a day, “I’m first getting rid of tenure---that’s my personal opinion---and there would be a performance assessment for teaching and then there would be better pay for teachers.”

Noting that she grew up in a household of teachers, she added emphatically “at the same time, I think that the government should supplement education and supplement education for people who are disadvantaged.”

D. Career Preparation & Development

During the online virtual classroom stakeholder input session, the concept of career development and advancement was a significant issue raised, although some related issues were raised in some of the focus groups.

Several participants in the online classroom felt that “people with disabilities need real jobs, not just minimum wage, no benefits jobs.”

“People with disabilities need to make thoughtful decisions about career choices,” said one advocate, while another said that “we need opportunities for advancement.” Or, “people need to be able to advance in careers,” another advocate said.

An advocate for employment policy changes relating to people with disabilities called for “service providers to discuss opportunities about career paths” with their consumers.

One disability employment specialist suggested that an effective means for securing employment was to “link people with disabilities to temporary employment agencies.”

As a means to assist in developing careers in the trades, a participant in one of the union focus groups called for “paid mentorship programs, such as for machinists, apprenticeships, etc.”

A frustrated employer said that he believes “people with disabilities need to develop a better work ethic,” noting that “motivation is the key” to any good employee.

“What I need to have is honest feedback from supervisors, honest performance appraisals,” said one employed person, explaining that employers are reluctant to be critical of someone with a disability.

The state “needs to focus some attention toward increasing job retention rates for people with disabilities,” said one independent living center director.

Yet, an employer said that “for retaining employment people with disabilities may need to re-think what they ‘will’ and ‘won’t’ do.”

Another employer said that in his company, “academic and community college training was necessary for career ladder advancement.”

E. Connecting Activities

Each of the stakeholder sessions produced a great deal of comments and recommendations in the broad area of supports and services that people with disabilities need to be connected to in order to gain, maintain, and retain employment; that is, “connecting activities.”

Several people with disabilities and their advocates participating in the online classroom input session called for “funding for training and mentors and role models.” As one advocate put it, “we need role models of people in the

workforce that “look like me.” Another person said that the state should help “develop systems for mentoring.”

Access to health care continues to be the overriding issue people with disabilities point to as a barrier to employment. “The health care piece is so critical because you’ve got someone who is working; it’s actually coming along beautifully. You’ve got a business person who says ‘hey, this is working,’” explained a disability employment specialist, referring to an individual with significant mental health needs. “And then that person who normally can just go to the doctor here is not, and then they are gone for like maybe six weeks, trying to get care out of the area. And unfortunately what that does with our businesses is that they say ‘that’s just too hard to try and work around.’”

Some advocates called for an expansion of the California Working Disabled Medi-Cal Buy In program, with an emphasis on increasing the asset limits, increasing outreach and recruitment efforts, and evaluating the possibilities of recruiting unserved populations.

A number of people with disabilities and advocates raised transportation as a significant barrier to employment. Some called for “developing systems of transportation to meet employment and recreation needs” of the disability community. The lack of public transportation “truly is a barrier, especially for some people who can’t drive,” said a worker’s compensation consultant. “It’s a real challenge,” particularly in rural parts of the state.

“People with disabilities need one-on-one counseling, according to one employment specialist. One disability service provider said that “most people with disabilities just need to avail themselves of the services that are available.”

“People with disabilities need to connect to community programs and consumer directed organizations,” such as independent living centers, People First, etc., said one disability rights advocate. “People with disabilities need to learn self advocacy skills,” said one independent living center director while another said that they “need to advocate for themselves and learn how to influence public policy” to improve programs and services for people with disabilities. Taking the concepts a bit further, another advocate participating in the online classroom said that people with disabilities “need to participate in plan development, policy development and implementation.”

A service provider recommended “maintaining and increasing funding for Regional Centers’ Supported Work programs.” He went on to call for expanding Medi-Cal by allowing the program to pay for Supported Employment.

“More Disability Program Navigators are needed to answer questions,” said one savvy advocate. “We do placement with folks with disabilities,” explained a One Stop Career Center director during one of the interviews. “We have been very

fortunate because we have a disability navigator here and that person in our center, who is funded through the state, actually has done training with every employee that we have to help them become aware certainly with what the laws are and what type of assistance is available” for serving people with disabilities.

“We’re trying to attack the employment problem two fold,” explained one major Northern California disability service provider. First, “we are focusing on developing square employment groups out in the community” for individuals with developmental and other significant disabilities, which is “a wonderful opportunity to give them that step between our work centers and individual placement. We find this to be very, very helpful.”

“For those going on from groups and to supported employment, we’re having some success there. I wouldn’t say a lot of success, though, because those individuals do need some level of support.” But it is employment in “an integrated setting and over time who knows what they might learn and pick up and transfer that knowledge to other employment opportunities,” the employment specialist continued. “On the other side what we’re trying to do is to integrate our facilities,” with what he calls “reverse integration” in which nondisabled employees work alongside disabled employees in their employment centers. “My hope is to have maybe our initial goal of 50-50, blending in other people with disabilities and those with developmental disabilities as well as nondisabled.”

The organization is making this shift “because those real simple jobs” which used to be performed by people with developmental disabilities in these sheltered environments “you can’t get them anymore.” In essence, “we’ve discovered that providers need to figure out how to come to market with differentiated products,” he further explained. “In the competitive world that we live in globalization, Wall Street, technology, etc., unless you have some kind of differentiated service your effectively not competitive because there is some guy, and name the country, China, Malaysia, wherever, that will actually do this work for even less than what we pay our people with disabilities.”

F. Addressing Employer Needs

One of the most unique features of this stakeholder input collection process was the emphasis on trying to gain an understanding of the feelings, beliefs and needs of businesses and employers, a critical customer in the success of any disability employment policy. The draft Comprehensive Strategy contains a section on the needs of employers, thus it was one of the major themes of the entire stakeholder input process, especially the key informant interviews.

“I think a lot of it is ignorance or assumptions that managers and supervisors make,” explained one employer participant. “They are so under the gun and each year because of the world economy and the competition gets so intense

that they are expected to have people producing 150% of capability all the time.” He elaborated by saying that “I think the first thing they see is another problem. ‘Here I am having trouble meeting my bottom line’ and so they assume that if somebody has any kind of restrictions or limitations or needs some type of ongoing help at the worksite that it is just going to hold them back and put them more in the red and then they are going to be under the gun from their manager.” Saying that managers “consciously and probably both unconsciously think about (this) when it comes to working with people with disabilities,” he added that “I think it comes out of ignorance or they’ve had a bad experience with someone that maybe didn’t have a real impactful disability but perhaps they were using that.”

“You know, honestly my gut tells me that one of the biggest barriers employers have is that fear factor,” said a One Stop director. “Not knowing really how simple it is to make an accommodation to work with someone who is disabled. I think that is what we’re really doing, is trying to help overcome those misunderstandings.”

“What I’m seeing, though, with the way business is changing so quickly, is that carving out a job is getting more and more difficult to do,” said one job placement specialist who works with large corporations. “And employers are asking employees to do multiple jobs now and for many of our folks multitasking is a real difficult thing to do,” she said, noting that she is experiencing difficulty working to place individuals with developmental disabilities. “The more competitive the job market becomes, the more difficult it is to find employment.”

“What we’re finding is that the mental health population is actually very highly skilled and, yes, there are the other challenges obviously that they’re dealing with,” a disability service provider’s job developer said. “But, if that has been stabilized and they’re in a system that supports them, they can be very successful on the job.”

“We try to educate the employer,” added another disability employment specialist. “We don’t necessarily divulge the disability, but we obviously talk about our program, the supports that we offer in trying to assure the employer that there are supports out there if there are issues. It’s just a quick call away to get things resolved.”

He elaborated by explaining that “we are working with those with developmental disabilities and their skills set is fairly limited.” In the last seven to 10 years, he has seen a real change in the job prospects for this population. “Remember, in the past there were lot and lobby jobs at McDonalds? We haven’t made a lot and lobby placement over the last four years because those employers are now expecting you to do the lot and lobby and then you have to go cook and then you have to do the cash register and on and on.” In other words, “all employers basically now are asking them to multitask and that is pretty difficult for that

particular population. We're still making our placements, but were finding it more difficult as time as gone by."

"Because of the legal environment, it makes it difficult for us to be really frank," said one human resources manager. "And then, on the other hand, I sometimes feel, for instance, when I pull up information on EDD when I want to find out about laws and so forth, sometimes it is very difficult to find information."

"I spent a day and a half trying to get through to the IRS on an issue, an employer issue," she continued. "I find the same thing with EDD and some of those (government programs), I don't think they understand the corporate environment."

Another small businessperson said: "So there is a perception out there with a lot of small businesses. They used EDD in the past," he explained. "Basically there was no support at all. Now this may be past history, but this is the perception. There was no support at all for the employer," he said, noting that small businesses expected EDD to help screen at-risk candidates since they typically do not have human resource departments.

"When I worked for the state Department of Rehab, I saw bureaucracy as well, you know all the administrative hoops that you had to do to where you know it just kind of took the fight out of all your creativity and initiative," said one employment specialist, commenting on barriers to working with employers. "You were just over burdened with administrative detail and that's what your supervisor most of the time would ding you for. It wasn't so much the quality of the plans that return somebody to work. It was where you didn't complete this form, or you didn't justify this particular part of it and so the focus always seems to want to go into the administrative detail."

The human resources manager who was one of the key informant interviewees said "for a corporate environment it's the challenge of, you know, the fact that making money is the goal. It's not just about quality of life for people in providing them jobs; it's about making money. And sometimes you have to be realistic....I think sometimes, for instance, some of the things that I've had to do from a compliance standpoint are nuts, its crazy."

Saying that "the stereotype is really true," another employment specialist with a private service provider said that "I think a vast percentage of employers see government programs and people working in them as people that are a cut below where they are and they are only working for public entities because they can't cut the mustard in the private world, in private industry, or they just don't have the brain power or whatever it might be." So, "if they have government contracts, meeting all of those criteria, or if it is trying to get people with disabilities into the workforce," he continued, "whatever it is, they just kind of assume 'boy, you know

this is going to be like pulling teeth because these people just don't get it, they don't understand or they just don't have the ability to really understand.”

In other words, the employers “didn't want to take the time, they made a lot of assumptions that they were going to get inferior people and have to work with inferior people to make it happen and they just didn't want to deal with it. It was just a nuisance,” he explained. “Fortunately there are a lot of exceptions on both ends and I think that is maybe part of where some of the solutions lie,” he concluded. “There really needs to be something in place that will enable education and understanding to occur on both sides. Where you fit that in to your daily schedule I think is a challenge.”

“I think a lot of it is really the (company's) culture and I think the challenge is how do you convince people that you can still have a culture of inclusion that includes a risk,” said one human resource manager with a large employer, noting that when she worked for a large national bank and a large computer manufacturer they were “willing to develop programs, including programs for people with disabilities.”

Pointing out that “the squeaky wheel gets the grease,” she went on to say that “You see a lot of inclusion programs in corporations but most of the time they forget about people with disabilities or it's a minor part of their program because people think about women and minorities and always see people with disabilities as an interest group.”

“Depending on what the disability is, their needs are different and where do the problems lie in getting back to work or retaining employment,” the human resources manager questioned. “However you don't want to spend all your time and effort just addressing that because then you start losing sight of the fact that we're trying to mainstream people and when you don't mainstream people that becomes part of the problem.”

Raising an issue that is often cited as an incentive for employers to hire people with disabilities, one service provider suggested that “smaller employers need to know about tax credits” that are available. “The other question that I would ask is where do tax credits fit into the equation?” queried the small business entrepreneur, noting that he interviewed 300 small businesses on the Welfare to Work Program and tax credits “came in way down the list, almost to the point of inconsequential.” In fact, a number of people he interviewed said that “you cannot pay me enough to hire a bad employee! So with a small business, if that employee does not fit then it can really create chaos in the company.”

Participating in advisory committees was one issue that stood out in a couple of focus groups. “I resigned from the (committee) and one of the reasons was the way it was handled,” said one disgruntled employer, referring to the way the board's staff would deliver a full package of material shortly before the meeting

with no review time and expect the committee to approve the staff recommendations without discussion. "It was just a useless board. Hopefully it will get it back together, but it was just totally useless." Another employer added, "Our very first meeting we needed to approve the five year plan and we received the information on it like two days before---a 135 pages plan---but it needed to be approved at the first meeting." Regarding communications with employer advisory committees, one key informant said: "It is awful, it is just awful!"

One of the key informants interviewed has taken matters into his own hands to try to address the needs of small employers. "I am an insurance agent and that is how I make my living; however I am very involved in small business political activities on a state, local, and national basis," he began. "In San Francisco I created two organizations, one is a small business, which is about 19 associations with 17,000 small businesses in San Francisco and I also created the small business advocates, which is a political action committee in San Francisco. I also just created, in the last six months, an organization called Small Business California and that will be a state wide advocacy group and what we are focusing on are the core issues based on our poll and we did a poll of 600 small business people. The major issues were health insurance, workers comp, workforce development, regulations, access to capital and energy. So those are our six focus issues."

One of the outgrowths of his work was the creation of San Francisco Collaborative, "a program to help small businesses comply with ADA and Title 24" that stemmed from "some lawsuits that were being brought by unscrupulous attorneys in San Francisco." The Collaborative can serve as a nice model for peer-to-peer assistance for small businesses.

Admitting that he hasn't really worked with the disabled, the small business entrepreneur felt he has "a general feeling of the whole aspect of working with public agencies and employers" because of some prior work he was involved in around welfare to work. "One of the things that I have heard from small businesses that have looked at this is their past experience to some degree is dealing with people that don't have a clue about small business and instead of coming from the business side they come from the social side." He explained: "the question that I would ask potential executive directors is 'Why should small business hire these people?' And I only interviewed two, I took the final two and talked to them, but one of them said 'well because it is the right thing to do.' The other said 'because it is a good business decision.' Obviously that is who we hired." In other words, from the perspective of the small business community, "the goal of these agencies is to place people with no concern about whether there is a fit or not."

"I think what is really helpful is to go through an intermediary organization or somehow to validate that there is a sensitivity and understanding of small business and that they are truly listening to small businesses," he continued. "I

think that is why our program works so well, because there was a sense within the small business community in San Francisco that this was our program and we had input, instead of a sense of ‘we are going to try to jam a square peg into a round hole.’”

“As Governor for a day, I would maybe create some incentives for manufacturing to happen here” in the state, said a technology-based employer. “Or else we are going to lose all our labor base.”

One area addressed during the key informant interviews was how to improve the business climate of disability employment service providers who typically receive preferential contracts, government financing and grants to assist people with significant disabilities in securing employment, often in sheltered- and/or supported-employment settings.

“Let me take off my dreamer hat and kind of lay out some of the more practical type things that I think can be done on a state level that will actually help organizations like ours or our colleagues because we face the same pressures as any other business, whether it would be rising health care costs to worker’s comp,” said the large disability employment service provider. “Attracting capital is an important issue. One of the challenges I see with this industry right now is that we really pride ourselves in being a good place to work and treating our employees fairly so they all have benefits. But as you know the cost of health care is just over the top. I don’t know if the industry has ever looked at like consortia idea, you know much like the premiers in the hospital industry model.

Another concept suggested was to recognize certain work done across disability employment service providers like his as an entire industry, such as custodial work in which it is estimated the collective revenue approximates four hundred to five hundred million dollars a year.

“Think about that for a minute,” he asked. “From an industry perspective, it puts us well into the top ten, if not the top five. So when you start thinking of this industry as more of a consolidated type of entity, you know maybe this is something that we need to start thinking about.”

The other “practical piece that struck me was, you know we’ve achieved a fair level of success in the Javitz O’Day Program?” he continued. “In California, while it has this permissive legislation where if a contracting state entity wanted to contract under this program, they could sole source it to an organization such as ours. It would be great if we can add actually some teeth and maybe some more weight to that, whether it would be through point scoring or some type of subsidy.”

G. *Leave No Youth Behind*

In the context of disability employment policy, a great deal of attention has turned toward improving the transition of youth with disabilities from school to work and independent community living in recent years. Accordingly, several of the informal focus groups were organized to solicit input about youth transition programs and services, including from youth and family members. In addition, the subject was also addressed in the online classroom.

“Youth need improved skill sets,” said one commenter. Another made it clear that “youth with disabilities need skills to manage necessary support services” that they will encounter in the maze of transitioning. An employer said that youth “need computer and reading skills just to complete job applications.”

“Today’s youth need a better understanding of the benefits and outcomes of employment and careers,” commented one person. One parent said that she thought the student’s Individualized Education Program “should inform students about the need to work.”

Addressing an issue that resonates with employers, one participant said that youth need experiences to learn soft skills and gain exposure to jobs.” A focus group member put it another way, “Youth need to learn work ethic, such as being on-time, willing to work, having soft skills.” And an employer said that “youth with disabilities need to learn social skills.”

To assure success after school, “youth need connections to employers” and youth with disabilities “need a variety of opportunities to learn what jobs they like or not,” commented two separate participants. Another said that they also “need jobs with opportunities for advancement.”

To assist youth with disabilities in better understanding the employment options in front of them, commenters suggested that they “need early exposure to work environments,” “need better access to career counselors in education settings such as high schools,” and “schools need to identify internships and work experience, including paid work experience, not just volunteer positions.” One participant said that youth “need on-the-job experiences, a chance to use their adaptive equipment in the workplace and an opportunity to build their confidence.”

“The Certificate of Completion doesn’t help youth with disabilities get jobs the way a regular diploma can,” said one frustrated parent. Several other parents in one focus group focused on the California High School Exit Exam and suggested that there needed to be alternatives for disabled students to achieve a high school diploma. Some felt that “tutors are needed to help youth with disabilities understand their studies and improve their grades.”

“Youth need college opportunities instead of an immediate job after high school,” said one online participant. They also “need assistance to have and maintain their motivation to pursue long-term education and training” opportunities said another. One visually impaired college student said that the “caring staff of the disabled student services program made a big difference” for him as they were able to help him focus on his strengths. Another disabled student said that she wished she had access to “supportive college teachers.” And a disabled student in a focus group said that “the Department of Rehabilitation needs to pay for college” while another said that “students should work with the Career Center and obtain Social Security information.” One disability rights advocate argued, however, for students who are on Social Security to receive “benefits planning counseling as soon as possible so they can make informed decisions about their futures.”

“Youth with disabilities need mentors and role models of people that ‘look like me’ who are in workforce,” said one independent living center director. One young woman said that her “supportive family members, including my grandparents” have made a big difference in her completion of college and pursuing employment.

The Department of Rehabilitation’s Workability program was highly touted as being very helpful for youth with disabilities to learn how to talk with employers about accommodations, for getting refresher training and learning what it takes to get a job, and getting familiarized with skills and techniques to find a job.

Several focus group participants said that youth with disabilities needed “access to services,” “access to better transportation,” and “access to health benefits, either through their parents’ insurance, buying their own insurance or through Medi-Cal.”

One experienced independent living center advocate said that “youth need an understanding of how and when to use disclosure and requests for accommodations to their best advantage.” This notion of understanding how and when to disclose a disability was echoed by several advocates during the online classroom sessions.

“Youth with disabilities need to learn to advocate for themselves and how to ask for accommodations,” said one focus group participant. “Motivation training is needed for youth with disabilities and their parents,” said one service provider while a teacher said that “most youth with disabilities need confidence, communication, and socialization training.”

Some focus group participants also identified the need to “develop youth at work curricula,” “need to make courses more accessible to those with cognitive disabilities such as by being more interactive and using more pictures,” and “schools need to teach transition into life after graduation earlier than they do.”

Another issue raised during several focus groups was the need for parents and family members of youth with disabilities to have access to a variety of information and communications about transition and employment opportunities. As one parent said, “parents need more people in different programs to answer questions” while another in the same focus group said that “parents need locally provided resources, even after programs for youth are over.”

H. Working with Veterans

One of the focus groups was organized specifically to collect input for the Comprehensive Strategy around issues effecting the employment of disabled veterans, which produced a rich collection of information.

The “military doesn’t prepare people to make it in the civilian world, especially if you come back with a disability,” one focus group participant stated. “The average soldier needs at least six months to prepare. He or she needs a transition program.” Another participant said that “veterans returning from combat need more than Core A services.”

“Service providers don’t know where to send veterans,” a focus group participant said, adding that “there is no single point of contact” for a veteran to receive employment services. “Someone needs to take responsibility for coordinating providers to help define each other’s roles in serving vets,” one observer pointed out while another called for “much better communication and coordination” of veteran services. “We need a one-stop team model to address veterans’ services.” In addition, “TAP curricula changes are needed to make sure veterans are aware of resources in their local community,” one counselor said.

“There is a great need for family support services for veterans,” said one participant, while another added that “we need to educate veterans and families regarding mental health issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder.”

Expressing concern for veterans with mental health needs, one participant said that “it is easier to track veterans with physical disabilities, as they return for care.” One individual charged that the “VA is not tracking Reserves or National Guard” veterans returning from Iraq. “They are getting lost.” Another indicated that “County Mental Health organizations need to be included in service provision” as a fellow participant said that “Veterans need help in removing the stigma of asking for mental health services.”

“Reservists/National Guardsmen and women are displaying issues with employment and their families when they return,” warned a participant while another said that Reservists “who are deployed to combat area can receive up to

two years of VA benefits. If they are not deployed to a combat area, they receive no VA benefits.”

“The military is keeping over 200 soldiers at Balboa and 100 at Camp Pendleton on medical hold until their disability stabilizes to ensure they continue to receive military pay and benefits,” another participant reported.

“We should begin providing training services to soldiers as soon as they know they are going to be released,” said one focus group participant, noting that veterans need “much more than TAP, such as assessments, training, etc.” Some of the other service needs that stood out of the focus group included comments such as “Vets need equal treatment to access high school and community colleges,” “Veterans need to learn that basic skills are needed for civilian employment,” “we need early intervention and prevention for veterans,” and, there is a “need for mental health support systems for families, including broad-based wraparound programs.”

“There are age related issues for younger vets and women,” one member of the focus group said. “Veterans organizations are used to dealing with the older vets,” he continued, “but now they need to learn to deal with the younger vet.” For example, one commenter indicated that “younger soldiers are taken off their normal developmental track and for them it will take longer to return to an occupational or employment track.”

“Residency is an issue for some soldiers released in California who want to stay here, but can’t afford to go to school here,” commented one focus group member. Another recommended adoption of “a law that if a returning soldier meets certain criteria, there would be no charge for community college tuition.”

However, most focus group participants agreed with the commenter who said “a holistic approach needs to be taken” to providing employment and re-entry services to veterans and their family members.

I. Injured Workers

Another unique characteristic of the stakeholder input strategy employed by the CHIIP and CDIHP is the focused attention on injured workers in the workers compensation system as an important element of disability employment policy to be addressed by the Comprehensive Strategy. Many of the key informant interviews focused on this population, and the worker’s compensation support system.

“People who are injured on the job, whether worker’s comp or other disability programs, just don’t know how to navigate the systems,” one focus group participant said. Another focus group participant suggested that people with

disabilities “need to be informed of (workers comp) system requirements” and “need help with knowing what they need to do to receive assistance and navigate the system.”

A couple of the focus group participants complained that the “UI process is unclear,” “staff do not seem to be trained to assist” or they “get different or conflicting answers” from staff, and that the “Job Services staff automatically refers people with disabilities to Vocational Rehabilitation.” One focus group participant said that “Vocational Rehabilitation needs to do more career counseling, career exploration, and benefits planning counseling.”

Noting that “oftentimes there is anger, fear and depression” on the part of an injured worker, a worker’s compensation consultant said that “people have a certain fear of going back to work, whether it is because of their injury or they are going into a new occupation so they have fears about whether they will be able to compete.”

“Where I think I’ve had an impact or was able to make an impact was encouraging and supporting enough---but not too much---to get people to see that they can do it and they are going to be successful,” explained one worker’s compensation consultant. “You have to create a plan where the clients themselves feel that they are going to be successful and not be reinjured, but because they’ve been out of the workforce awhile providing some new skills to kind of refresh them and create an atmosphere that they are going to get remotivated not just thrown back into the workforce and get overwhelmed.”

“The worse case scenario for failure is someone who is filing a claim because of disciplinary action, they’ve had a bad review, they don’t get along with the co-worker and the employer says ‘you know what? We don’t like this person and we’re not going to do anything to help get them back to work,’” explained one worker’s compensation specialist. “We still see that; not nearly as often, but we still see the worker’s comp system being used as a disciplinary tool and in my opinion that’s failure for everyone involved.”

She went on to say that “the critical success to me is really two fold. One is you have to have a patient who is willing and wants to return to work and willing to do that in an efficient manner. In other words there aren’t secondary obstacles that may be created by them which would delay their recovery. And, just as important as having a patient wanting to go back to work, we have to have the employer willing to work with the patient, the physician, the therapist, whoever may be treating that person to also want them to go back to work.”

“I think that if we, as a society, are committed to keeping people working and allowing them to be productive and allowing our economy to continue to grow, then those people who are invested and willing to work should be provided with the resources to get them back to work,” commented another workers

compensation counselor. “For someone who isn’t interested in going back to work, who for whatever reason in their life they would rather be doing something different, then it’s probably a waste of time, energy, and resources to put into that individual.

The first worker’s compensation specialist pointed out that there are several research studies that support the concept of “keeping someone in a safe work environment, especially if they are able to continue to interact with their co-workers, with their supervisors.” This sort of interaction “limits the potential for developing a disability mindset. We would much rather have someone working in a safe restrictive work setting than saying ‘until you’re a hundred percent better, we are going to have you just sit at home,’ become deconditioned, watch television, put on weight. We know that those people have a much harder time in returning to work.”

“Something I realized a long time ago was that identifying the risk early on was financially advantageous compared to trying to exempt and so we aggressively try to identify those cases and move them into the rehab process and back to work,” explained one employer-based workers compensation specialist. “We consistently were able to conclude our cases on average several thousand dollars per case less than the state average and so we got a fair amount of credibility.

“The other obstacle was the employer and there are still too many employers who say that they don’t want to take somebody back until they are 100 percent, not realizing that of course most of them were not 100 percent when they hired them,” a workers compensation consultant explained, Noting that he was encouraging employers to use a partial return versus full return to work strategy.

Speaking of “our biggest challenge,” one worker’s compensation specialist warned that “employers are still, in some situations, being penny wise and prone foolish and not looking out for what we term primary prevention.” He recalled instances where employers were unwilling to invest in “implementing a comfortable and ergonomic work setting” as a means of avoiding future workplace and work-related injuries. “What we should be doing is really identifying where the mismatch may be between the job duties and the patient’s abilities to do those duties, even before they are injured,” the specialist said. “That would be a much more effective way to minimize injury to maintain the employer’s level of production and decrease their overall costs of disability.” He went on to explain that “if you can get someone comfortable from the moment you hire them...and you show them that you are concerned about their well-being, I can promise you that your worker’s comp costs are going to be much better controlled. If you wait until there is a problem, or even worse, if you ignore a problem that has already been identified, then you’re going to ask for trouble.”

“If you can get people back to work sooner than later,” commented a worker’s compensation consultant, then “it’s a win/win for both the disabled or injured worker as well as for the company.”

“Well, the biggest single element in a success is usually in an individual’s motivation,” explained one employer. “If you are well motivated then you can overcome a lot of inner things.” But in addition to the person’s motivation “which means getting them into a return to work process as early as possible after their injury, the longer the person sits at home the worse it is. I can almost guarantee you that if a person sits at home for three years you have less than a ten percent chance of getting them back to work,” he elaborated. “So the sooner you get them turned around, notwithstanding the employer and the doctor, the better they are going to be, the higher their percentage of their reemployment.”

One physician who works with injured workers explained that when someone is deemed as “being permanent and stationary, or the new term now is “having reached maximum medical improvement,” one of the items that we have to address is whether or not the patient can return to what’s called their usual and customary duties,” that is, the regular duties they were doing before the injury, “or whether they need permanent work restrictions and if that is the case, then we, as the primary treating physician, are obligated to identify what those permanent restrictions may be.”

Another worker’s compensation consultant emphasized that it is “important to work with the employer and educate the employer on what would be a safe return to work, an accommodation plan” for injured worker.

Noting that “it all goes back to that prevention point of identifying what may not be right for the patient in the work environment,” the medical consultant who specialized in workers compensation cases explained that “there is some argument in the medical community nationwide as to whether or not repetitive work activities really cause some of these upper extremity, repetitive strain injuries, or are some people just naturally more predisposed” these types of injuries. Nonetheless, she pointed out that “regardless of what the ultimate cause is, to assure that someone has an appropriate work station set up” can make an incredible difference. “And we’re not talking about a \$1,300 chair and the fanciest keyboard in the world. We are talking about relatively small amounts of money to be spent that goes a tremendous way in making someone more comfortable.” Noting that the “success never ceases to amaze our patients,” she added that “the most gratifying thing is (when) someone comes in and we give them some educational tools with a few visits with our therapist. We have someone go out and take a look at their work area and simple changes are made,” such as getting them a keyboard tray or a workable chair. “That’s about all that they need. We are not talking about a year and a half of therapy, injections, and surgery. Those are the most gratifying cases.”

“We also try to encourage the patient not to take a passive role in their recovery, whether or not someone has had a nonindustrial diving accident and they are a C7 quadriplegic or whether or not they are not being treated what they feel as fairly by their employer,” she continued. “We really try to encourage people to practice, for lack of a better term, communication and make it clear what they feel they need that would be appropriate to make their work environment safe.”

“It all boils down to prevention, educating people, what is the right thing to do, what is the wrong thing to do and then communicating with everyone involved in getting something better,” she continued. “Those are the three corners, so to speak, of a good foundation in getting someone back to work safely.”

Explaining that people are “psychologically and financially” devastated when they are disconnected from the workplace for an extended time, one worker’s compensation consultant said “we actually had a meeting with our insurance carriers and they said you know we just know the value of work for people and something happens to people when in their home for months and months inactive,” as they devised a return to work plan.

“There needs to be more incentives to encourage employers to see retaining injured workers as a benefit as opposed to liability,” said one worker’s compensation specialist. “If they don’t, if they want to maintain a stance that they are not going to take people back then they need to pay the price.”

One human resources manager expressed concern that the “worker’s comp system is used as a disciplinary tool to get rid of undesirable employees.”

“For return to work to be successful, we need an employee who wants to return to work and an employer who wants the employee back,” said one worker’s compensation consultant. And, another expressed concern that “people who want to work should have the resources to do so, and those who don’t want to work should not be a draw on resources.”

“I tell employers that they need to build relationships with their medical provider,” said one worker’s compensation specialist. “So I make it the employer’s responsibility because as often is the case on the rehab counselor service provider side, many physicians feel like they have to defend their patients against employers.”

“Most employers expect that if a person has a disability, that individual is going to get re-injured,” explained one workers compensation specialist. “Actually every study that I have ever seen says that people who have suffered significant injury are actually no more likely to get injured---and even less likely to get injured---because nobody in their right mind wants to go through that system again and the pain that goes along with having an injury.”

“Going back to the State of California, the ‘03 and ‘04 reforms of Worker’s Comp both had strong language written about helping employers develop train to work programs,” stated a worker’s compensation consultant who works with large employers on returning injured workers back to work. “What has been done? Nothing has been done!”

Noting that the ‘03 legislation said “we are going to get savings from helping employers learn about disability and return to work,” he claims the Department of Industrial Relations “has done nothing! So I hold them responsible for a lot of the failures, at least in this venue of helping employers really understand it is not that big of a deal, it is not brain surgery, it is fairly practical and there are a lot of qualified successful people with disabilities” who can be helpful. “It annoys me so much, all of this political posturing and nothing is being done,” he adds.

Under the new worker’s compensation system, doctors are “told how they are supposed to characterize disability” and “now they have created a new system, which for return to work purposes is virtually worthless,” explained one consultant. “In the old days, they (doctors) gave us work restrictions such as no very heavy lifting, no repetitive bending, stooping, and things of that nature, which are imprecise but at least you kind of have some idea of what they are talking about.” But, “now the rating is in terms of whole person lost---actually we call it whole person impairment---where a person has, say, five percent whole person impairment,” he continued. “Well what good is that to me or to an employer? You need to understand how we should go about modifying somebody’s work so that they can continue working safely. It doesn’t tell you anything.”

He went on to say that “what we really need, and what we have always needed, is a functional capacity assessment, something that helps us understand what the person can do as opposed to what they cannot do.”

One consultant said that a rehabilitation counselor who is not part of the company is likely not to have enough credibility with the claim examiner, “so you sometimes have a tough job selling the return-to-work programs to the claims examiner.”

“We have to overcome resistance with employers in placing injured workers,” he continued. “We didn’t usually have to work with the pre-injury employer. We usually go to new employers. If we are trying to set up interview appointments for people who have not been at work for two or sometimes three years, occasionally four years, that brings up the issue of disability and they’re hesitant to consider people who have known disabilities.”

“The third problem was often the disabled person himself,” the consultant continued. “If they have been off work for so long that a lot of times they are depressed because of it and their problems have resulted in not having a steady

income, family problems. People have lost houses and cars and that sort of thing, so they come to the table with a lot of inquiry issues and you have to deal with the whole person.” He added that “even though it is not technically part of what you are supposed to be doing, if you don’t deal with it then you won’t be successful.”

J. Systems Alignment & Coordination

One of the areas of interest in the Comprehensive Strategy revolves around the coordination, collaboration and alignment of the various systems that people with disabilities access. While this was not a “hot topic” of concern for stakeholders like some of the other themes discussed earlier, there were a few comments that are worth noting.

“We need to develop a vision and belief that equality is possible” for people with disabilities in the workplace, said one consumer advocate. “The Centers on Medicare and Medicaid Services and disability organizations should be the leaders” in providing that vision, another advocate participating in the virtual classroom said.

One employment specialist said that “interdepartmental coordination has to be more than lip service” while another, more direct, participant said that state agencies need to “stop the turf wars.”

Another called for a “team approach and collaboration” across agencies to address employment issues while another called for the “development of more collaboratives, including employers.” It is “Important to coordinate support services and training programs,” another participant expressed. Another focus group participant said that “government programs should be modified or approached as being part of a system of workforce supports,” citing programs around transportation, health care, housing, workforce preparation, etc. One focus group participant said that he thought there needed to be an “integration of the various boards, such as WIB and Small Business Board.” And, yet another said that “funding sources need to combine funding streams to be most effective.”

Some of the comments had to do with the lack of familiarity of some systems with others. For example, the “worker’s comp system is not familiar with the workforce development system under WIA, particularly One Stop Career Centers,” one focus group participant indicated.

One consumer advocate said that “government and providers need to analyze barriers created by rules of work incentive programs.” Another participant said that “state Rehab agencies and private rehab counselors are not familiar with employer needs” while another said that “providers do not understand with

enough sophistication the employer issues.” And, an employer participant said that “we need a paradigm shift within education that employment is an expected outcome.”

Several stakeholders called for improvements in the accountability of existing systems responsible for assisting people with disabilities in securing employment. “We need better accountability for the services provided,” said one focus group participant.

Echoing the need for state government to serve as a model employer, one disability rights advocate said the “California Administration needs to lead by example” when it comes to employing people with disabilities. And, an independent living center director said that “One Stop Career Centers should fully partner with other community-based organizations” in facilitating the employment of people with disabilities.

III. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

It is always valuable to collect stakeholder input, and the comments and advice offered throughout this stakeholder input process underscore---and will inform---the growing body of knowledge in disability employment policy. Myriad studies, many reports and volumes of books have been written on the barriers to employment, the work disincentives, the transition needs of youth, the effective ways to work with employers, and on and on. Whole research and training centers have been funded for years, even decades, to address these issues.

A wealth of information has been gathered through this stakeholder input process, and can be found in this report and the accompanying appendix as well as the notes and transcripts from the interviews and the informal focus groups. What is clear from this body of work is that the issue of improving the employment of youth and adults with disabilities in the State of California is complex, must involve public and private collaborations, and cannot be addressed by one institution or organization alone. The Comprehensive Strategy needs to be exactly that, both “comprehensive” and not myopic and a “strategy” that is flexible, adjustable and refinable.

The pages of this report are filled with general and very specific, concrete recommendations from stakeholders themselves.

- 1) The Comprehensive Strategy needs to take a broad view, addressing multiple populations of people with disabilities (e.g. injured workers, veterans, youth, etc.), reaching across all government programs (education, employment and training, and social services, health services, etc.), and include the private sector;

- 2) The broad categories of the Comprehensive Strategy seem appropriate, although two additional categories could be added by separating preparation (and renaming it education and training) from supports and adding a new category around career preparation and development;
- 3) Additional points of research and analysis activities need to be identified such as a better understanding of the employment rate of people with disabilities, how many people with disabilities get hired and participate in the labor market, tracking the number of people with disabilities who leave the Social Security rolls for jobs, etc.; and,
- 4) A host of specific resources were identified and should be explored such as the private nonprofit called Disability Management Employer Coalition, the Department of Industrial Relations' the *Return to Work in California Project: Listening to Stakeholders' Voices*, the Carl Clinic's "wind Program, and so on.

All of this material and these resources should assist and inform the Governor's Committee, and its various subcommittees, in further refining and implementing California's Comprehensive Strategy for improving the employment rate of youth and adults with disabilities.

**APPENDIX A:
CA COMPREHENSIVE EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY
FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES:
STAKEHOLDER INPUT LIST**

STAKEHOLDER DESCRIPTION BY INPUT METHOD	# OF RESPONDENTS	DATE	SPONSOR
INFORMAL FOCUS GROUPS			
U.S. Department of Labor, Region IX Disability & Employment Conference Participants	35	30 Mar	CHIIP/Gov Com
RespectAbility Conference Participants	43	23 May	CHIIP
Employer, Lockheed-Martin	16	25 Aug	Gov Com
Labor Union Representatives	5	28 Sept	CDIHP
Sacramento City College Students, WorkAbility III	6	5 Oct	Gov Com
Parents & youth Orange Coast STEP & Bridges Program	21	24 Oct	CHIIP & Gov Com
Youth Whittier School District	12	25 Oct	CHIIP & Gov Com
Youth Seamless Transition Employment Program	12	25 Oct	CHIIP & Gov Com
Employers + Interested Parties Mt. San Antonio College	Unknown	26 Oct	Gov Com
CSU, Long Beach College Students	6	8 Nov	CDIHP
Bay Area Apprenticeship	18	8 Nov	CDIHP

Coordinators			
Veteran's	12	8 Dec	Gov Com
EMPLOYER KEY CONTACT INTERVIEWS			
Scott Hauge, Employer & Employer Organization	1	11 July	CDIHP
Robin Nagel, Health Care Provider	1	12 July	CDIHP
Peter Davie, Self Employed Workers Comp Consultant	1	15 July	CDIHP
Alan Leno, Self Employed Consultant	1	20 July	CDIHP
Steve Wiesner, Healthcare Provider Kaiser Permanente	1	2 Aug	CDIHP
Robert Clark, Self Employed	1	21 July	CDIHP
Anna Brassart, One-Stop Career Center	1	1 Aug	CDIHP
Tim Yamauchi, Disability Employment Agency	1	28 July	CDIHP
Patricia Wilbur, Human Resources, High Tech Company	1	20 Sept	CDIHP
Marilyn Ridgeway, Job Developer	1	20 Sept	CDIHP
ON-LINE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM			
Consumers & Consumer Advocates	24	28 July	CFILC & CWIIG
Consumers & Consumer Advocates	33	2 Aug	CFILC & CWIIG
MISCELLANEOUS INPUT RECEIVED			
Melissa Turner, National Consortium on Health Services for the Disabled	1	17 June	CHIIP
Teddie-Joy Remhild, CHIIP Steering Committee Chair	1	18 Nov	CHIIP

Brenda Premo, CDIHP & Key Contact Interviewer	1	25 Nov	CHIIP
Curtis Richards, CHIIP Contract Consultant	1	5 Dec	CHIIP
Bryon MacDonald, CWG World Institute on Disability	1	9 Dec	CWG

**APPENDIX B:
CA COMPREHENSIVE EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY
FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES:
STAKEHOLDER INPUT SUMMARY
BY INPUT METHOD & STRATEGY FRAMEWORK**

INPUT METHOD & STRATEGY FRAMEWORK	SUMMARY OF COMMENTS
INFORMAL FOCUS GROUPS	
A) BUSINESS NEEDS	<p>Need qualified employees to hire Looking for the best qualified person Look at skill sets first Review skills from resumes before talking to candidates Bottom line is “Do they have the skills?” If so, everything else can be worked around Candidates need right skill set – workers are not trained for high-tech Companies can’t discriminate in this job market Hiring managers need to learn how to work with PwD Legal issues cause trepidation for managers Don’t know definition of “reasonable” for accommodations Managers don’t typically know unless someone asks for an accommodation Don’t want to hurt feelings by asking the wrong questions Definition of disability is vague Don’t know disability etiquette Need to better understand ranges of disability Need to infuse humanity into human resources Employers need education so don’t discriminate when PwD discloses disability Don’t make assumptions, e.g. “Cerebral Palsy does not equate to mental retardation” Training for managers is lacking One employer started affinity groups (including PwD) to help identify accessibility issues</p>

	<p>Smaller companies more nervous about cost of accommodations, especially those companies without a human resources department/person</p> <p>Companies with fewer resources may be less knowledgeable about laws</p> <p>Companies need info on legal requirements, resources and HR issues</p> <p>Cost of accommodations unknown, if known may alleviate some smaller employer concerns</p> <p>Lot of misinformation about cost, e.g. PwD missing work, health care costs is prevalent</p> <p>Smaller employers need to know about tax credits</p> <p>On-line training in short increments; every time you pull a manager off line, it costs the company money</p> <p>Examples of reasonable accommodations</p> <p>Continuing education, 1 to 2 minute continuing sagas</p> <p>Post info on website</p> <p>Job postings need to be placed in places that youth frequent</p> <p>Need to reach out to employers</p> <p>Provide a welcoming environment to PwD</p> <p>Employers often not willing to do accommodations/light duty for WC PwD to return to work</p> <p>Construction industry views workers with disabilities as liabilities (insurance and safety)</p> <p>Need to learn from Heartland Foundation in San Diego about how to find better matches between employers and PwD</p> <p>Lot of jobs in construction, but difficulty with people with learning disabilities (lots of math, oral and written instructions); some success with mix of on the job and classroom instruction</p> <p>Employers see value of retaining employees</p> <p>Employers need to buy in that no one is perfect, e.g. always have families with problems</p> <p>Employers need to talk to other employers, peer to peer, re: retention, HR, and Health Care costs</p> <p>Need tax Credit for employers who hire people with disabilities</p> <p>Education to change culture in companies</p> <p>Employers tend to be more tolerant of youth than adult workers with developmental or learning disabilities</p> <p>Issue around getting employers to the table to hire veterans; there is no single point of contact</p> <p>Direct relationship between employer/supervisor and worker leads to success</p> <p>Example of how employer plays a key role: Machinist who assembled airplane engines was</p>
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	<p> blinded on the job; post WC was able to return to work to disassemble engines for maintenance Workplace is scared to hire a PwD Soft bigotry of low expectations of employers Employers hear from other employers about successes in hiring PwD Employers need incentives to raise awareness Focus on ability Recognize abilities rather than disabilities Use common sense, courtesy, and sensitivity with everyone Need ambassadors to get education and training about hiring PwD Need more information on hiring PwD Allow PwD to use leave to receive necessary treatment Educate to change attitudes of employers Use appropriate behavior and etiquette when interacting with PwD Consider how the employees with disabilities will evacuate the premises in an emergency Provide special equipment to be available to help with evacuation Inform safety coordinator of employee's location before emergency occurs Assign buddies for employees requiring assistance during evacuation Incentives provided by state to encourage hiring of PwD Educate companies about the hiring process for PwD Need employees to hire Less paperwork and more efficiency from the state Unaware of what is "reasonable" for accommodations Need training to ease fear of litigation Need education to correct misconceptions Need employees to have reliable transportation Feel standards for job coaches are to low Job developers need to keep a fluid relationship with employers through continuous contact More experienced and educated job coaches Train employers on how to handle accommodations Employer training and education Change employer attitudes </p>
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	<p>Need to look for abilities and be open-minded Information about hiring PwD must be brought to their attention so they are aware Reduce process and paperwork involved in state reimbursement Need DOR to provide help and work with employers efficiently Need higher standards and education required for job coaches for them to be beneficial Adequate transportation for employee Want professional, certified job coaches Incentives provided by state so employers are receptive to accommodation PwD Need communication to front-line managers Job sharing is an alternative for employers to share the hours for students Employers need to be told about accommodations and job coaches during interview</p>
<p>B) PREPARATION & SUPPORT</p>	<p>PwD need to “get out of their own way,” need to help themselves PwD come with attitudes PwD are not labor market ready PwD want people to do the work (employment search/interview) for them PwD need to be trained to operate in the high tech world PwD don’t know how to ask for accommodations – affects job performance All applicants must be computer savvy Some PwD don’t want to ask for accommodations, they want to be treated like everyone else Many PwD don’t know how to ask for accommodations, which affects job performance Candidates must have skills & be ready to accept rejection and keep going Need fewer people on Medi-Cal Need attention to increased job retention rates for PwD Link PwD to temporary agencies Develop systems of transportation to meet employment and recreation needs PwD need to avail themselves of the services available PwD need to learn self advocacy skills PwD need to advocate for themselves, learn how to influence public policy PwD need to participate in plan(s) development, policy development & implementation PwD need to connect to community programs, e.g. People First, etc. Need to develop systems for mentoring</p>

	<p>For retaining employment PwD may need to re-think what they “will” and “won’t” do</p> <p>PwD need to make thoughtful decisions about career choices</p> <p>PwD need opportunities for advancement</p> <p>PwD need to be “savvy” and specific about their needs</p> <p>PwD need role models of people in the workforce that “look like me”</p> <p>PwD need soft skills</p> <p>PwD need honest feedback from supervisors/performance appraisals</p> <p>PwD need to develop and articulate skill sets</p> <p>PwD need to develop better work ethic</p> <p>Motivation the key</p> <p>PwD need service providers to discuss opportunities about career paths</p> <p>Service providers need to view employers as partners/committed in making their workforce fully inclusive</p> <p>Service providers need better business and public sector linkage</p> <p>Employers don’t know how to reach workers with disabilities and service providers do</p> <p>Service providers need to create a more welcoming environment, “this place is for you”</p> <p>Service providers need to practice common courtesy toward PwD</p> <p>Greater accountability for service providers</p> <p>Support work expectations</p> <p>Service providers should address the full array of barriers</p> <p>Accessibility an issue for PwD using service providers</p> <p>Service providers need to be diverse in their knowledge of disabilities</p> <p>Staff of service providers need to be sensitive to disabilities and disability issues in attitude and culture of the organization</p> <p>Service providers need to collaborate and come to agreement on the goal</p> <p>Staff of service providers need to keep careers in mind, not just a job for PwD</p> <p>Service providers need to work with education</p> <p>Transportation for employment and independent living needs</p> <p>Workers with disabilities get stuck in the Worker’s Comp system, unable to find WC physician to certify ability to return to work</p> <p>WC PwD need job transition to new jobs with less physical demands</p>
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	<p>Needs assessment on issues of worker health and safety, focus on DD & best practices</p> <p>Need to address English as a Second Language issues in PwD, language & reading</p> <p>Injured workers, WC and other workers have trouble navigating state and social services system</p> <p>Barriers PwD face that need to be addressed include: employers communicating directly with the worker not just coaches or placement staff; co-workers and supervisors fearful or uncomfortable; disabled workers get less training and suggestions from other staff & informal education is limited</p> <p>Construction trades have state certification tests, PwD not provided accommodations</p> <p>Customized training program for shipyard building e.g. General Dynamics wanted to reduce turn over in boring jobs that worked well for DD workers e.g. cable plugging, cross training in 8 different areas,</p> <p>Job coaches can be very helpful</p> <p>Paid mentorship programs, e.g. machinists, apprenticeships</p> <p>Funding for training & mentors</p> <p>PwD need real jobs, not just minimum wage/no benefits jobs</p> <p>Academic/community college training needed for career ladder</p> <p>Formal wrap around services piece needed, need support services plus training, hands on, needs to be paid for; includes PwD & non English speaking workers (TAT funds, 25% funds)</p> <p>Maintain and increase funding for Regional Centers' Supported Work</p> <p>Medi-Cal funds for Supported Work</p> <p>People need to be able to advance in careers</p> <p>Could retrain away from heavy physical work</p> <p>People who are injured on the job, whether worker's comp or other disability programs, don't know how to navigate the systems</p> <p>Service providers don't know where to send veterans; there is no single point of contact</p> <p>Veterans returning from combat need more than Core A services</p> <p>Military doesn't prepare people to make it in civilian world; average soldier needs at least 6 months to prepare. Need a transition program</p> <p>It is easier to track veterans with physical disabilities, as they return for care. Veterans with mental health disabilities are much more difficult to track</p> <p>TAP curricula changes are needed to make sure veterans are aware of resources in local community</p>
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Prevention of mental health/alcohol and drug issues may stop high number of homeless vets
 VA are not tracking Reserves/National Guard; they are getting lost
 Reservists/National Guard are displaying issues with employment/families when they return
 If NG/Reservist deployed to combat area they can receive up to 2 years of VA benefits; If not
 deployed to non-combat area they receive no VA benefits
 The military is keeping over 200 soldiers at Balboa and 100 at Camp Pendleton on medical hold
 until their disability stabilizes to ensure they continue to receive military pay/benefits
 Veterans organizations are used to dealing with the older vets; need to learn to deal with the
 younger vets
 There are age related issues for younger vets/women
 County Mental Health organizations need to be included in service provision
 Great need for family support services for veterans
 Veterans need help in removing stigma of asking for mental health services
 Need one-stop team model to address veterans services needed
 Need to ask the soon-to-be released veterans what they need
 Vets need equal treatment to access high school and community colleges.
 Residency is an issue for some soldiers released in CA; want to stay but can't afford to go to school
 here
 Need a law that if a returning soldier meets criteria, there is no charge for community college tuition
 Veterans need to learn that basic skills are needed for civilian employment
 Programs need to be designed to help medics transfer to LVN
 Younger soldiers are taken off their normal developmental track; for them it will take longer to return
 to occupational/employment track
 A holistic approach needs to be taken, family issues need to be addressed
 Begin providing training services to soldiers as soon as they know they are going to be released;
 much more than TAP, like assessments, training, etc.
 Educate veterans and family regarding mental health issues (PTSD)
 Need early intervention and prevention for veterans; intervene early to prevent more serious issues
 Need mental health support systems for families, including broad-based wraparound programs
 Programs are impersonal
 EDD's job services is now impersonal compared to years ago

	<p>UI process is unclear & staff do not seem to be trained to assist, get different/conflicting answers</p> <p>Job Services automatically refers PwD to Vocational Rehabilitation</p> <p>Vocational Rehabilitation needs to conduct initial assessments, not just pre-injury experience</p> <p>Vocational Rehabilitation needs to do more career counseling, career exploration, benefits planning counseling</p> <p>PwD need one-on-one counseling</p> <p>For SCIF, an information sheet is needed to let PwD know what to expect</p> <p>PwD need to be informed of system requirements, help with knowing what they need to do to receive assistance & navigate the system</p> <p>Better trained staff are needed throughout the system</p> <p>PwD need better education</p> <p>YwD need improved skill sets</p> <p>YwD need college opportunities instead of immediate job after high school</p> <p>YwD need better understanding of the benefits and outcomes of employment and careers</p> <p>YwD need assistance to have/maintain motivation to pursue long-term education and training</p> <p>YwD need mentors, role models of people that “look like me” who are in workforce</p> <p>YwD need first experiences to learn soft skills and gain exposure to jobs</p> <p>YwD need variety of opportunities to learn what jobs they like or not</p> <p>YwD need jobs with opportunities for advancement</p> <p>YwD need to get honest feedback from supervisors on performance in early work experience</p> <p>YwD need connections to employers</p> <p>YwD need an understanding of how and when to use disclosure and requests for accommodations to best advantage</p> <p>YwD need skills to manage necessary support services</p> <p>YwD need to learn work ethic, e.g. being on-time, willing to work, having soft skills</p> <p>YwD need better access to career counselors in education settings/high schools</p> <p>YwD need early exposure to work environment</p> <p>Schools to identify internships and work experience, including paid work experience, not just volunteer positions</p> <p>YwD need to learn social skills</p> <p>Need to develop youth at work curricula</p>
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	<p>Need to make courses more accessible to those with cognitive disabilities, e.g. more interactive, more pictures</p> <p>Promote all programs that promote youth and workers to work recognize that disability is part of all programs</p> <p>Department of Rehabilitation needs to pay for college</p> <p>YwD learn to advocate for self & ask for accommodations</p> <p>Caring staff of disabled student services make a difference, help focus on strengths</p> <p>YwD need on-the-job experiences, a chance to use the adaptive equipment and build confidence</p> <p>Supportive college teachers</p> <p>YwD need an understanding of how/when/how much to disclose</p> <p>YwD need to learn how to deal with the social service systems</p> <p>YwD need to learn how to enhance their skills, especially marketability using computers</p> <p>Students with disabilities need to learn about the “outside world”</p> <p>Students should work with the Career Center & obtain Social Security information</p> <p>YwD need access to services</p> <p>YwD need access to better transportation</p> <p>YwD need research their career goals, have internships and job shadowing opportunities</p> <p>RSP in secondary school, disabled student services in college, vocational rehabilitation assistive technology & Recordings for the Blind & Dyslexic all helpful to YwD</p> <p>Supportive family members, including grandparents</p> <p>YwD need access to health benefits, either through parents’ insurance, buying their own insurance or Medi-Cal</p> <p>IEPs need to inform students about the need to work</p> <p>Workability are very helpful for YwD to help learn how to talk with employers about accommodations, getting refresher training and learning what it takes to get a job, and getting familiarized with skills and techniques to find a job</p> <p>Individualized training for YwD aimed at personal job interest</p> <p>Experience and skill training needed for YwD</p> <p>YwD found rehab counselor helpful</p> <p>Transportation and car needed</p> <p>YwD need tutors to help understand studies and improve grades</p>
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	<p> Alternatives to HS Exit Exam to achieve diploma for YwD YwD need variety in occupation places YwD need practice interviews and group career training Parents of YwD need information and communication YwD need more job exposure YwD need to have the opportunity to receive a diploma with alternatives to the HS Exit Exam or a modified HS Exit Exam Certificate of Completion doesn't help YwD get jobs the way a diploma can YwD need more transportation options YwD need supplies in school in order to learn YwD need computer and reading skills for job applications YwD need communication services such as e-mail Motivation training is needed for YwD and their parents Bus training and education for parents regarding transportation for YwD YwD need diplomas to better obtain a job Grades should not be a barrier to gaining work experience YwD need proper preparation and training for college Education and information about drugs and their effect on keeping a job for YwD YwD need diplomas YwD need confidence/communication/socialization training for handling job fairs Mock interviews are needed for YwD YwD found job developers and teachers motivating YwD need role models YwD need to be taught Braille and spelling, not just one or the other Network for parents of YwD PwD need to developing concentration skills PwD need help passing the Exit Exam PwD need jobs they can live off of PwD need work skills that will help them achieve the job they desire; assurance of a future Schools need to teach transition into life after Graduation earlier than they do Parents need more people in different programs to answer questions </p>
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	<p>Parents need locally provided resources, even after programs for YwD are over</p> <p>PwD need information about who to contact after they graduate from their program</p> <p>More DPN's are needed to answer questions</p> <p>Parents of YwD need more understandable One-Stop website</p> <p>Connections within the system are valuable (to YwD)</p> <p>Experienced, professional staff was beneficial (to YwD)</p> <p>Specialized staff for each disability was helpful (to YwD)</p> <p>Need program for YwD who lack parental guidance</p> <p>Parents of YwD need more DOR internship programs</p> <p>YwD need an adult service provider for after high school</p> <p>Temp agencies were beneficial to some YwD</p> <p>YwD need more focus on individualized job development</p> <p>YwD need job developers at one-stops that can address their needs for a job</p> <p>Transportation planning is needed</p> <p>More job-sharing among YwD is needed</p> <p>YwD need to be able to make it on their own with the pay they receive</p> <p>There is a need for more job coaches to teach YwD skills individually</p> <p>More focus on interview skills are needed</p> <p>YwD need HS elective courses on how to get a job including interviews starting early in on in HS</p> <p>YwD need more assessment tools to find jobs that fit their personality</p> <p>YwD need individual self-acknowledgement in order to ask for accommodations</p> <p>Parents need information about available housing for YwD</p> <p>PwD expect to receive a diploma at the end of HS</p> <p>PwD need to know how difficult the Exit Exam will be and what alternatives there are</p> <p>Parents need information about the different transitions (into college, employment, unemployment, housing and healthcare) that come after HS for YwD</p> <p>One-stop website to confusing to access</p> <p>YwD need to employers who are willing to work with YwD</p> <p>Individualized job development is helpful when tailored to YwD needs</p> <p>YwD need one-stop to tailor to their needs for job development</p> <p>Bus planning is critical for employment and independent living for YwD</p>
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	<p>YwD who have strong desire and but are low functioning need programs to help achieve their goals</p> <p>Transition planning worksheets are helpful</p> <p>Parents and YwD need on-going resources available on a personal basis</p> <p>Parents and YwD need more people who work in specialized areas provided locally</p> <p>Students need to be able to advocate for selves</p> <p>Transition of resources from parent to other primary</p> <p>YwD need job coach counseling to help deal with employment problems</p> <p>YwD need role models “like them”</p> <p>YwD need a support system</p> <p>Job retention is improved when natural supports are formed at the employment site</p> <p>YwD need help starting employment experiences at younger ages</p> <p>YwD need more job developers and coaches.</p> <p>Focus needs to be on what jobs are available, what interest YwD has, what YwD can do</p> <p>YwD need assessment programs and tools to help find a job that fits their interests</p> <p>Highly motivated YwD drives the successful work effort</p> <p>Question as to who will help students after they leave HS</p> <p>YwD need to know and articulate the accommodations they need during the interview</p> <p>YwD need to develop communication skills</p> <p>YwD consider job places that are close to home convenient for transportation problems</p> <p>YwD desire living independently without a guardian</p> <p>Some YwD don’t want to live alone and mention roommates</p> <p>YwD need work experience programs in their HS/can be a problem traveling to another place for the programs</p> <p>YwD need to be made aware of programs that can assist them and help them plan for the future</p> <p>YwD need more support and job and interview training from Career Link</p> <p>Developing living skills is very important to the independence of YwD</p> <p>YwD need independence with transportation</p> <p>Support from role models important influence in YwD lives</p> <p>Group support needed</p>
<p>C) ALIGNING SYSTEMS</p>	<p>Need to develop a vision and belief that equality is possible</p> <p>CMS & disability organizations should be the leaders</p>

	<p>Stakeholders include State, PwD, employers (not leaving out nonprofits, policymakers and small business)</p> <p>Need better accountability for the services provided</p> <p>Team approach and collaboration</p> <p>Funding sources need to combine funding streams to be most effective</p> <p>Develop more Collaboratives including employers</p> <p>Important to coordinate support services and training programs</p> <p>Much better communication/coordination needed around veteran services</p> <p>For veterans, coordination is needed; need to know who is doing what and where</p> <p>Need to talk with new vets to determine their needs</p> <p>Connect with the CalVet Board which is starting to look at a jobs program</p> <p>Someone needs to take responsibility for coordinating providers to help define each other's roles in serving vets</p>
D) OTHER	<p>Need to have high expectations for PwD</p> <p>Need higher expectations of selves</p> <p>Should not settle for "whatever"</p> <p>PwD should be prepared to fail</p> <p>PSAs regarding PwD in primetime to help change perception</p> <p>Global awareness training on both sides – employers and PwD</p> <p>Lower unemployment rate for PWD</p> <p>Need a better understanding of how many PwD got hired</p> <p>Need to keep track of number of individuals who get off SSI or decrease SSI dollars</p> <p>Need to see improvement in numbers of employed PwD</p> <p>Success will be evidenced by improved transitioning of youth to work</p> <p>People clearly identified as PwD are not necessarily visible</p> <p>PwD need to have proportional representation on providers' staff</p> <p>Need public policy agreement that funding for critical support programs are full and sustained</p> <p>Need public education about adult workers who haven't been diagnosed and about secondary disabilities, particularly drugs and alcohol</p> <p>Community collaboration is the key</p> <p>Funding for training and community collaboratives e.g. SF Foundation/EDD function</p>

	<p>People don't know what disability means; need a definition & link to VA rating</p> <p>Disability may be a temporary issue; definition needs to address this also</p> <p>Every time a soldier is deactivated they receive a DD214. For some soldiers, they may have up to 4</p> <p>The VA benefits paid to veterans add up to a lot of money going into counties</p> <p>Need to encourage veterans to stay in CA and become productive tax-paying citizens</p> <p>Veterans voice on local WIBs</p> <p>To speed up process of receiving electronic books, publishing companies should provide all books on CD</p> <p>Stop increasing tuition & taxes</p> <p>Need a campaign on increased awareness of disability</p> <p>Need publications about resources for PwD</p> <p>YwD need to make enough money to live on (e.g. raise minimum wage)</p> <p>Palm pilots needed to help YwD stay on track of their schedule</p> <p>YwD need to have jobs without it costing them money from their SSI</p> <p>SSI needs to not be so difficult</p> <p>Parent forums for networking and obtaining information</p> <p>Parents need local information, not just state</p> <p>YwD need state mental health facilities to provide more services than medication and have easier access to the facilities assistance</p> <p>Parental concerns need to be addressed about YwD only receiving proper assistance if incarcerated</p> <p>Address parents concerns that employers do not want to hire PwD</p> <p>There needs to be a study on the difference in earnings and self-confidence between students who have a diploma and students who have an alternative (certificate of completion)</p> <p>Need to consider group settings for getting information to the parents</p> <p>Provide an easily navigated website for parents to obtain information from</p> <p>Parents need a Parents Training Information center</p> <p>Helpful for parents to know about job trends and availability</p> <p>Parents need to know if there are enough places for YwD to find jobs and if there are enough hours available</p>
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	<p>Money from SSI should not be taken away when PwD make more at work PwD need the independence associated with saving money and buying a house and should be allowed to save more PwD feel government inquiries into their lives are to personal</p>
<p>EMPLOYER KEY CONTACT INTERVIEWS</p>	
<p>A) BUSINESS NEEDS</p>	<p>Employer advisory boards are often useless; need to be valued, taken seriously Major issues of concern are health insurance, workers comp, workforce development, regulations, access to capital and energy A program to help small businesses comply with ADA and Title 24 Awareness education & training Business wants to change the ADA requirements Correct misperception that everything has to be 100% accessible People/government that understands business, not just social services Employers need people they can hire based on good business decisions, not because it's the "right thing to do" Small business community feels that government agencies try to place people with no concern about whether there is a fit or not Employers need support of government agencies, especially when they are willing to undertake targeted hiring initiatives Small businesses, which have no human resource personnel, need properly screened candidates and support once they hire someone (aka. Intermediaries) Employees with good attitudes and soft skills Help with training, especially for small businesses Candidates that meet the basic requirements of the job Tax credits are meaningless if the individual is a bad employee Asked business what they are looking for and then developed a program around those leads Employers need disability awareness training to break down fears Employers and co workers need to be sensitized to how to accommodations Helpful when employer pays for accommodations One on one contact is more effective with small businesses than getting them to attend trainings</p>

	<p>Businesses need help with workers comp system</p> <p>Businesses need to identify workers comp cases early and move them into rehab early</p> <p>Employers need to understand & adopt Return to Work policies</p> <p>Employers need to be encouraged to rehire their injured workers after rehab</p> <p>Employers need to understand cost/benefits of partial return strategies for workers comp cases; they are hesitant to help the person incrementally return to work</p> <p>Employers are hesitant to hire when there is a known disability</p> <p>Employers fear injured workers who returns to work will reinjure themselves</p> <p>Needs to be more incentives to encourage employers to see retaining injured workers, e.g. tax credits</p> <p>Employers need to be educated about the cost of accommodations</p> <p>Employers need help dealing with all the worker's comp forms and processes</p> <p>Employers are nervous about the public sector</p> <p>Employers need to know the hard and soft purposes of accommodations</p> <p>Employers need to partner with community-based organizations</p> <p>Employers need to build a relationship with their medical provider, especially if there's a Worker's Comp situation</p> <p>Employers are frustrated with the Worker's Comp medical paperwork & paying extra to have an intermediary deal with it</p> <p>Employers need to be an equal part of a Worker's Comp disability management team</p> <p>Employer needs to communicate positive Worker's Comp program philosophy to doctors to build trust</p> <p>Employers need disability training, including front line supervisors & managers</p> <p>Employers need in-house disability training expertise</p> <p>Need to implement Return to Work provisions of 03/04 Worker's Comp reform laws</p> <p>Employers are confused & befuddled about how to deal with injured workers</p> <p>Employers need to focus on preventing workplace injuries</p> <p>Employers can offer an injured worker different tasks that have been neglected for a long time as a return to work tool while waiting for full work readiness</p> <p>Employers need to use mediation & alternative dispute resolutions processes</p> <p>Need a curriculum for employers to develop return to work programs</p>
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	<p>Employer consortia can be effective means for delivering training</p> <p>Human Resource people think about PwD and how they can't use their limbs</p> <p>Employers have negative impressions of PwD because they think they are taking advantage of them, particularly workers comp cases</p> <p>Difficult for employers to get disability information from EDD or IRS</p> <p>State agencies don't understand corporate environment; it's about making money, not quality of life</p> <p>Employers don't know much about the Department of Rehabilitation services</p> <p>Employers have to invest a lot of staff in dealing with human resources-related paperwork</p> <p>Employers don't know where/hot to find college graduates with disabilities</p> <p>Need more of a partnership with state government for employers to hire any kind of employee</p> <p>Employers are reluctant to hire PwD based on ignorance, stereotypes and assumptions</p> <p>State government bureaucracy is an obstacle for employers hiring PwD</p> <p>Private sector employers hold negative stereotypes of public sector employees</p> <p>Employer associations (e.g. Chamber of Commerce) do not make hiring of PwD a priority issue to work on</p> <p>Employer diversity or inclusion programs often do not include PwD</p> <p>Employers driven by fear of litigation</p> <p>Employers are expecting employees to multi-task as budgets and competition have gotten tight</p> <p>Employers comfortable hiring PwMHN cause they know there is someone close by to help</p>
<p>B) PREPARATION & SUPPORT</p>	<p>Program Navigator has been very helpful in working with One-Stop Staff and employers</p> <p>People with mental health needs are in desperate need of medical services, particularly in rural CA</p> <p>Transportation needed to get people with mental health needs to medical services outside the rural area</p> <p>One Stop Career Centers need to better understand the needs of businesses and how to better match people referred for jobs</p> <p>One Stop Career Centers need funds for Disability Program Navigators</p> <p>Programs need to model employing PwD</p> <p>Programs need resources for to enhance & conduct ongoing education & outreach</p> <p>Programs need to promote Return to Work policies and programs</p> <p>a rehab counselor who is not part of the company is going to have enough credibility to the claim examiner</p>

	<p>PwD in workers comp for a long time need to be treated as a whole person to overcome personal barriers (e.g. mental health, financial, family, etc.)</p> <p>PwD in workers comp have lot of fear about leaving something comfortable & ability to compete in new positions</p> <p>Doctors tend to treat worker's comp cases too long</p> <p>Injured worker needs motivation to return to work</p> <p>Injured worker needs to get into a return to work process as early as possible</p> <p>Workers comp rehab counselors need employers & doctors willing to cooperate with return to work strategy</p> <p>Voc Rehab counselors need a better understanding of employer needs</p> <p>Workers comp providers need to understand employer needs</p> <p>Providers often don't understand or trust employers</p> <p>Providers need to break the communication gap with employers</p> <p>Providers need a set of core issues to address with employers</p> <p>Doctors need to be an equal part of a Worker's Comp disability management team</p> <p>Doctors need to be trained in disability in employment/workplace</p> <p>Doctors need short, easy to fill out Worker's Comp forms</p> <p>Human Resource managers need ongoing training in disability in the workplace</p> <p>Web-based training opportunities are cost effective</p> <p>Department of Industrial Relations needs to put resources into developing employer competency around disability and return to work</p> <p>Doctors & nurses need to work w/Worker's Comp patients earlier than when referred by attorneys</p> <p>Doctors need to work better with employers and insurance companies as part of Disability Management Programs</p> <p>Doctors need to reduce non-medical administrative lag time in Worker's Comp cases</p> <p>Doctors need better understanding how to work with employers about injured worker's functional capacities</p> <p>Need a functional registration program for people who experience delayed recovery from musculoskeletal disorders</p> <p>Guest speakers can be important motivators for injured workers</p> <p>Ticket to Work program could be very helpful for injured workers</p>
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	<p>Doctors & medical other professionals need return to work training</p> <p>Having technical skills makes someone more employable</p> <p>Master's in Voc Rehab provides good orientation to medical aspects of disability</p> <p>Voc Rehab more interested in filling out forms than quality of employment plan</p> <p>Need to eliminate all Voc Rehab supervisors</p> <p>Need to put the focus on results in public rehab program</p> <p>Public sector employees don't understand private sector</p> <p>Need an education program aimed at getting public and private sector employees to understand each other</p> <p>Too many middle managers in public service</p> <p>Injured worker is much better off in a restrictive work setting than sitting at home</p> <p>Need to make the employee comfortable from the start to avoid long term problems</p> <p>Important for medical professionals to work with employer and educate the employer on what would be a safe return to work, an accommodation plan for that individual</p> <p>Need to assure that someone as an appropriate work station set up</p> <p>Prevention, education & communication are the cornerstones of good return to work programs</p> <p>Medical team needs to make sure that accommodation issues are thought about at the moment the patient walks in the door</p> <p>People with mental health needs must have systems in place to support them outside of work to be successful</p> <p>Mental health population is highly skilled</p> <p>Providers are beginning to use "reverse integration" as a means of mixing nondisabled with PwD in sheltered and supported work settings</p> <p>Providers need to figure out how to come to market with differentiated products</p> <p>PwD need internships and work-mentors and role models</p> <p>Need to develop models for successful internship opportunities</p> <p>Need to remove economic disincentives for PwD who want to work</p> <p>Providers need to refer PwD to benefits planning counselors & websites such as DB101</p> <p>Legislative structures (e.g. Lanterman Act) have driven provider industry</p> <p>Providers need to be able to attract capital due to rising costs and to stay competitive</p> <p>Providers need to form buying consortia</p>
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	<p>Legislation needed to require, rather than allow, state agencies to contract with disability provider organizations</p>
C) ALIGNING SYSTEMS	<p>Need integration of various boards; e.g. WIB & Small Business Board Worker's Comp system not familiar with workforce development system under WIA, particularly One Stop Career Centers State Rehab agencies & private rehab counselors not familiar with employer needs Provider doesn't understand with enough sophistication the employer issues</p>
D) OTHER	<p>Economic development in energy-related industries, including green industries, will be created in the next 10 years Understanding the definition of disability to include people with mental health needs Need a positive media campaign to put small businesses at ease State needs to improve whole worker's comp program, particularly claims processing Need to dispel myth that injured workers who return to work are no more likely to have another injury than any other employee Worker's Comp Whole Person Impairment rating scheme is not helpful to employers or rehab counselors for understanding what injured worker can do Functional Capacity Assessment needed in Worker's Comp system Need to improve accountability for both defendant and applicant in worker's comp system Employee needs to be consulted in Worker's Comp disability management Disability management team needs to be built between employer, doctor and both public and private providers Not a lot of overt discrimination SHRM conferences need to deal with disability in the workplace Need to reform proving level of impairment for SSI/SSDI to avoid institutionalization of PwD in those programs Attitude is a very big & costly barrier</p>

	<p>A person's own anxiety, fears, anger can be a barrier to returning to work</p> <p>Need a grassroots campaign that addresses disability prevention and safety and health promotions</p> <p>Need to invest in accessible medical equipment, e.g. adjustable exam tables, to help avoid Worker's Comp claims from back injuries related to dead body mechanics</p> <p>Not enough work done on the front end to help injured workers understand what their capabilities are</p> <p>People do not know how prevalent people with mental health needs are</p> <p>Physical accommodations are commonplace now with Worker's Comp ergonomic consultants and buildings having access</p> <p>PwD need to post on Google, JobFinder, etc.</p> <p>Need to eliminate teacher tenure, require performance assessments and increase teacher pay</p> <p>Need to reduce cost and improve quality of education</p> <p>Need to supplement education for disadvantaged, including PwD</p> <p>Need to create some incentives for manufacturing to return to the state</p> <p>A lot of PwD have the attitude that someone's going to take care of them and they don't have to do anything</p> <p>If coddle PwD, then taking away from their ability to help themselves</p> <p>Need to conduct major public relations campaign to educate about PwD, including by using some of the more successful PwD, & operationalize through employers</p> <p>Improve visibility of PwD</p> <p>Self motivation & self direction important for PwD to go to work</p> <p>Need to create individual rehab plans that help PwD feel successful</p> <p>PwD need to be mainstreamed into community & disability community, State & employers need to help do that</p> <p>Worker's Comp system used as a disciplinary tool to get rid of undesirable employees</p> <p>For return to work to be successful, need an employee who wants to return to work and an employer who wants the employee back</p> <p>People who want to work should have the resources to do so, and those don't want to work should not be a draw on resources</p>
<p>ON-LINE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM</p>	

<p>A) BUSINESS NEEDS</p>	<p>Business needs broader pool for promotional opportunities Employers need to engage in promoting and implementing solutions to increase employment opportunities for PwD Employer outreach & education should address a range of accommodations and practical human resource management tools Government employment is “other” type of employer; private sector less likely to look to it as role model Employer needs to be educated on tax credits in hiring PwD Ensure that have a pool of qualified, work-ready, willing applicants before approaching employers Need to emphasize soft skills Employer education should include resources people, services, technology, & costs of average accommodations Job Accommodations Network should be a recommended site for employers Need employer awareness Human Resources people need to be trained about hiring & accommodating PwD Employers need to provide honest feedback to workers, especially in relation to first work experience Business retains qualified employees Employers need more information about workers & possible accommodations for mental health disabilities Employers will help by providing honest feedback on performance reviews Human resource managers should have tools to assist with benefits management Services to businesses need to include useful resources & information relating to workers with disabilities Employers might understand importance of health care/ benefits for employees Help employer educate current workforce on working with PwD Educate employers on available intervention services All types of positions & worksites are accessible to PwD Promote best practices of employers who promote PwD Employers should offer training & retraining opportunities Employers need to be educated about how productive & valuable workers with disabilities can be,</p>
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	<p>how much accommodations typically cost</p> <p>Part time work, volunteer work & internships should be included as part of transition to first work experiences</p> <p>Temporary employment options need to be supported</p> <p>Additional rehabilitation engineers support to assist employment & supported employment</p> <p>Employer partners embrace students & young adults with the most severe disabilities</p> <p>Employers need disability awareness training by PwD</p> <p>Employers need educating about disabilities that can occur on the job</p> <p>Need more support and understanding about disabilities from employers</p> <p>Employers who would contribute to community wholeness by integrating PwD into workforce</p> <p>Employers need to retain employees with solid skills sets & experience</p> <p>Employers need more interaction about workers and possible accommodations for mental health disabilities</p> <p>Should give recognition to company that employs PwD</p> <p>Need more resources at the entry points and more creative ways to get education & accommodation information out to employers and HR folks</p>
<p>B) PREPARATION & SUPPORT</p>	<p>PwD need financial assistance for educational opportunities beyond bachelor's degree</p> <p>Need to increase the asset limitation for California Working Disabled Program</p> <p>Department of Social Services needs to implement CWD program through counties</p> <p>PwD need opportunities to do career changes and alternative education</p> <p>Need opportunities to keep benefits during transitions</p> <p>Keep benefits during job or career changes</p> <p>Employment service programs need to address individual plans for self-sufficiency</p> <p>Health & Human Service programs need to encourage employment & self sufficiency</p> <p>Local transportation systems need to meet employment needs of PwD</p> <p>Programs need to be accessible via welcoming entry point</p> <p>Easy access for PwD consumers to get information & services</p> <p>Eliminate loss of work incentives-linked benefits upon illness, injury, retirement</p> <p>Worker's Comp and SDI viewed as unearned income</p> <p>Government should include IHSS & health care (including Medi-Cal) with employment-related needs</p>

	<p>Need to include benefits/work incentives training for consumers</p> <p>Department of Rehabilitation should develop formal intern programs with employers</p> <p>Department of Rehabilitation's recent federal audit raising concerns about PwD & jobs</p> <p>Medi-cal buy In program not being implemented; need increased outreach efforts</p> <p>Need more PwD in state/county employment as a model</p> <p>More PwD will retain employment</p> <p>Need more PwD using One-Stop Career Center services</p> <p>Need increased graduation from the educational system of work-ready students</p> <p>Need to educate individuals about work incentives</p> <p>Need to improve accessibility of existing programs</p> <p>Need to improve employment focus of social service programs</p> <p>Need increased understanding amongst service providers of disability issues impacting employment</p> <p>PwD need disclosure training</p> <p>Ensuring that PwD retain their jobs over the long haul</p> <p>Health & other supports in place to ensure long-term employment</p> <p>Improved number of trained, skilled, prepared individuals ready for employment</p> <p>PwD have greater opportunity to work in private sector</p> <p>Need increased retention success and promotion of PwD</p> <p>SSA work incentives should be explained when returning to work</p> <p>Education about independent living & ILCs & what they can offer transition age youth</p> <p>PwD need info on own accommodation needs & resources for employers to get these items & services</p> <p>PwD have a pre-employment need of learning about assistive technologies & support systems</p> <p>Employment preparation programs need to include assessments and training on assistive technology</p> <p>One Stops & other providers involved in work preparation need to be linked to assistive technology systems</p> <p>Youth and adult mentorship opportunities are needed</p> <p>Paid internships exempt from work incentives penalties</p> <p>Counties are not implementing the Medi-Cal Buy In program throughout the state</p>
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	<p>An onsite mentor or job coach would help guarantee job success</p> <p>Improve accountability in the K-12 system for preparing transition age youth for employment</p> <p>Individual plans for YwD should include knowledge of benefits planning</p> <p>Transition services should include connecting activities</p> <p>YwD need college opportunities post high school</p> <p>YwD need access to career counseling & work experience in education settings</p> <p>PwD need assistance to get & keep motivated to pursue long term goals</p> <p>PwD need role models</p> <p>PwD need social skills development</p> <p>PwD need to develop work related skill sets</p> <p>PwD need to learn & practice self advocacy & disclosure strategies</p> <p>PwD need to understand long-term benefits & outcomes of employment</p> <p>Reduce need for cash supports & health care supports</p> <p>One Stop Career Centers need to be accessible & useable by workers with disabilities</p> <p>Skill sets should be developed to enhance flexibility in career movement</p> <p>Department of rehabilitation needs to be more consumer oriented with the vocational assessment & in helping PwD keep jobs, including with assistive technology devices, software programs & adaptive furniture</p> <p>Government services and outreach needed to everyone including employees, regarding accommodations and support possibilities</p> <p>Teach consumers that circumstances change (economy, health, industry, technology, family needs)</p> <p>Flexibility & continuing education are needed</p> <p>Clearinghouse for employers combining WC/SDE/Unemployment resources with work incentives info is needed</p> <p>Emphasis should be on long-term care planning & LTC insurance</p> <p>Need to address the severe marriage penalties, disincentives</p> <p>Need to be sure working on issues of older workers who become disabled due to aging process</p> <p>Focus on people who are aging into disability & need supports to remain employed</p> <p>Address needs of PwD seeking employment for first time, including aging disability issues and women with children</p> <p>Need a priority on opportunities for professional development & increasing professional skill sets,</p>
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	<p>including through higher education Department of rehabilitation should allow position & career changing to keep up with changing career needs & changes in the field PwD need benefits such as health care and tax incentives Affordable & accessible housing and transportation Reasonable accommodation & making assistive technology available to employees & employers Supportive services like transportation, housing, IHSS and medical benefits including Medi-Cal wrap around coverage & elimination of asset test for IHSS & Medi-Cal for those working Educate PwD about work incentives Need certification of skill level Need documentation of volunteer work or programs Internships for Youth Pre-vocational preparation for adults with mental health needs Preparation should include skill training, work behaviors, training in use of accommodations, & their use and job placement & interview skills Need a government program where employees with disabilities and employers pay into a fund to allow people with significant disabilities to work & pay for expenses such as AT, attendants, & durable medical equipment Need assessment of equipment or technology that PwD can use Clarify employer feedback, be positive not negative Internships before further education or actual hiring Job coaches that actually communicate with the employer to see where they can help train employee better Mentors have a major impact on future for YwD & PwD Offering mentoring opportunities that are culturally and disability appropriate PwD need better social skills YwD need employment & transition information YwD need employment internship opportunities as early as possible (14-15) Adults with mental health needs need support in learning workplace skills and independent living skills</p>
C) ALIGNING	Government & providers need to analyze barriers created by rules of work incentive programs

SYSTEMS	<p>CA Administration needs to lead by example</p> <p>One Stop Career Centers should fully partner with other community-based organizations</p> <p>Government programs should be modified/approached as being part of a system of workforce supports (transportation, health care, housing, workforce prep, etc)</p> <p>Services should be recognized as essential and need to work together for an individual to have success in achieving employment</p> <p>Paradigm shift within education that employment is an expected outcome</p> <p>Interdepartmental coordination has to be more than lip service</p> <p>Stop the turf wars</p> <p>Universal access (program & physical) should be priority outcomes</p> <p>Integrated communities where work, shopping, medical and housing are all in the same community</p> <p>Facilitate links with employer & one unified job developer/placement specialist</p>
D) OTHER	<p>PwD need increased self-sufficiency</p> <p>Increased self esteem & self confidence</p> <p>Less dependency & more independence</p> <p>Need fewer PwD on benefits, but still retaining health care benefits</p> <p>Need message that PwD can work</p> <p>PwD can be financially independent</p> <p>Getting PwD off Social Security</p> <p>Higher wages, better insurance</p> <p>PwD need to be included in any decisions around employment</p> <p>PwD should have proportional representation on staff</p> <p>Programs need high expectations & accountability</p> <p>Individual accountability that includes high expectations, accessing services & allowing for failures</p> <p>Self advocacy skills are important</p> <p>Adults re-entering the workforce should be a priority for services</p> <p>Youth entering the workforce should be a priority for services</p> <p>Current workers should be a priority for services in advancing careers</p> <p>Other target populations need to be ethnic minorities, other underrepresented populations, and adults entering the workforce for the first time</p> <p>Focus on lower educated, parents of children with disabilities and youth</p>

	<p>Focus on disabled population, senior population, non-English-speaking population Other target populations are PwD who have lived all their lives on income supports (SSI,SSDI) and don't know they can work; also people who want to change their employment direction & explore other fields Target high school and college graduates with disabilities Target full range of youth with mild and severe disabilities Target adults who have fallen through the cracks and need supports to either maintain employment or make career advancements Need increase in income levels of PwD Need PwD evaluation of programs via questionnaires & surveys Need improved data collection from agencies and service providers Need to advocate for specific disability populations Need to impact state policy development Retain employment, encourage advancement, increase economic power & ability to save Outreach to ethnic minorities Forestall/prevent need for public cash supports Increase number of people employed Important to be savvy & specific about employment & benefit needs PwD getting reasonable accommodations funding easier from government sources More action, less talk Improve quality of life & positively affect disability competence within local communities Independency Workforce housing, cost of living, living wage & employee retention Quality of life indicators to include self sufficiency, hours worked, income earned Understanding that it's always better to work Improve workforce diversity and representation of disability More PwD in our Government Increase in salary or wages, increase in hours worked, advancements Positive job reviews or violations PSAs showing Best Practices of employers & impact on community</p>

MISCELLANEOUS INPUT RECEIVED	
A) BUSINESS NEEDS	
B) PREPARATION & SUPPORT	<p>Applicants with disabilities are not work ready</p> <p>Worker's Comp doctors must be paid and must be trained on how to provide functional information</p> <p>Nonprofits that work with PwD better understand the employers' needs</p> <p>Unions have good projects that need financial support</p>
C) ALIGNING SYSTEMS	
D) OTHER	<p>This is not a "comprehensive" strategy; the first Comprehensive Strategy, as called for under AB 925, needs to address all aspects of employment and training of P/YwD</p> <p>Strategy is vague & needs a lot more specifics</p> <p>Should not limit strategy to ages 18-64; don't use stereotypical language such as "older worker"</p> <p>Thinking outside the box means thinking beyond tradition & stereotypes</p> <p>Government & worker's comp counselors do not help PwD get ready for employment</p>