Onondaga Pathways to Careers Community of Practice Introductory Meeting
February 24, 2016 - Transcript

Good Morning and welcome to the Onondaga Pathways to Career Community of practice meeting we are just about ready to start the meeting, I am doing a final audio check as a reminder please mute your phone lines and your microphones when you are not talking this will reduce the interference from outside voices. Meera whenever you are ready we can begin.

Meera Adya: Great thank you. I'm sure a few more people will be joining us but I will begin with a little introduction and overview. So welcome to our pathways to careers community of practice. My name is Meera I'm the director of research for the Burton Blatt Institute and the person who's been emailing many of you. So glad you've been able to join us and I will be facilitating todays meeting as well as doing some presentation. We are very glad to have you join us today and learn more about our Onondaga Pathways to Careers Project and then share your work hopefully on some of these other pathways to careers projects that we know are getting started around the country this year, and other related work that you are doing as there's so much relevant happening today. Today's meeting will be an introductory one where we will provide an overview of our project, some context for these kinds of projects we will discuss elements and features of a pathways approach. One little bit about you and then set an agenda for future meetings for this community of practice.

Right before we get started with the substantive portion of our meeting. I do just want to quickly review some of the information frequently asked, questions regarding the posting system we are using. You might be participating by phone or you may be using our website conferencing system which is blackboard collaborate. It's

making it possible for us to conduct this webinar over the Internet and just about any computer with an Internet connection should be able to use it. However we recognize and I think we've already had a little bit this morning of some technical issues. If you can continue to check through your system please do so. Our IT staff I had copied on the original invitation email they are available to continue to troubleshoot behind the scenes if you would like.

If you haven't seen already I did also send and updated email shortly before our meeting got started with the PowerPoint. So if you are joining by phone you can still see the PowerPoint presentation it should be in your email.

Today's session is being recorded for everyone who is joining after the recording has began just so you know. This is so we can achieve this meeting and have it available for everyone and for those who may have missed it. Also all participants are having their phones and microphones muted. Please also check on your side and have them muted. This will help with prevent background noise and make sure we have a clear presentation. If you have questions we do welcome those, we want this to be very interactive and participatory, please do note them in the chat box which should be in the bottom left hand side of your screen and we will be monitoring those and addressing them either as they come up or towards the end when we have a discussion section.

So with that I will begin the formal presentation. As you can see from our title slide this is the Onondaga pathways to careers demonstration project at Onondaga community college that we wanted to tell you more about today and it is through this project that we are establishing this community of practice which is meant to be a nation wide community of practice on pathways to careers and related projects. If we could move to the next slide. I'd like to do some welcoming and introduction of the presenters we have today.

From the Onondaga Pathways to Careers Project which we'll call the OPC project from here on we have as project leadership Rebecca Hoda. And William Myhill who is the project director but at the last minute has been unable to join us. He may connect in later and we hope to hear from William. Rebecca will present some background on the OPC project. Introduction of the community of practice or CoP we have Michael Morris who will be leading our community of practice as well as myself who will be supporting Michael in this work.

Rebecca Hoda: So I will turn it over to Rebecca who will take over and give you some background on the OPC project.

Hello everyone, I'll start by laying some of the groundwork as we start to frame and talk about the federal government priorities. The first one is to extend capacity of community colleges to respond to workforce needs. Also, prepare youth with disabilities with the necessary skills for jobs in high growth high demand industries and then also to promote community wide partnerships and institutional of higher education and workforce partners serving agencies and individuals serving individuals with disabilities. We've involved local employers in design and development used industries recognized credentials to provide participants with needed skills. Finally, utilize Odesk Skype for success as project framework. Just to talk a little bit about locally we're doing as far as the OPC project. We have a partnership with our College OCC-SUNY and Syracuse University and the Syracuse city school district as well as the public and disability service agents in the city of Syracuse. We have a demonstration project to determine what helps with young people with disabilities acquire the skills and degrees and credential for high wage high skilled deployment so that these effective practices can be replicated at other community colleges nationwide. This is one of the two funded sites. We believe we have a transformational approach we want align IEP transition planning with programs and services that support access completing and subsequent employment for OPC

educational and employment pathways in priority high growth industries identified by central New York regional economic development council. We have four major programs that we are focusing on right now. We have advanced mechanical manufacturing, mechanical technology, HIT Help information technology, CIS computer information systems and our electrical technology field. Within all of this we have five central goals that we're trying to integrate into this project. One is capacity building to develop and implement coordinated comprehensive sustainable systems of support that promotes access to success and career entry for individuals with disabilities. Two, career exploration and educational access increasing access and enrollment among youth with disabilities in the four-targeted programs. Three, educational attainment. Increasing persistence and completion rates. Which is the focus at every institution. Four, employment increasing living wages employment. Five dissemination to enable other community colleges to adopt the OPC model. Number five is one of the things tat we are working today as we start to develop our community in practice. Another key feature for the next five is transition planning and support. One of the challenges that we face is that on 27% of students with disabilities normal go on to college. Compared to 60% of those without. As you can see this is a very big difference between those populations. Also a lack of information about college admissions and financial aid packages and a lack of clarity about different levels of support form secondary and post secondary institutions. A few of the things that we are doing with this project is we've developed a Syracuse city school district partnership. That includes career awareness IEP transition planning, early awareness of the OPC employment pathways. A part of that is some targeted marking that we've done and developing materials to clarify everything that we're able to offer. We provide career awareness activities in high schools to support the transition. Help with the planning process; this is with financial aid applications and orientation for OPC programs. Another component is educational access and

success. Some of the challenges associated with a that are support for psych-social adjustment academic development and self-advocacy of individuals. There's also a lack of clarity about different levels of support from secondary to post secondary institutions. Some of the things that we are doing that we will get into greater detail at different points in our correspondence with each other. Career assessment, institutional planning, mandatory advisement, workplace experience, tutoring, adaptive technology, leadhsiper development and wrap around services.

When we talk about employment pathways some of the challenges are students often enter college with undefined career goals. Students with disabilities are underrepresented in technical education programs at OCC. We expect that would be true for other institutions as well. Some of the things that we will do and are starting to do is to provide early exposure to technical programs through concurrent enrollment courses, early college partnerships with the Syracuse city school districts, and a new school for technology within the city school district. We are working on an employer based curriculum development which is really exciting. We have some articulation agreement forged with local and international brotherhood for electrical workers and over 50 other colleges and universities. So as we start to work towards capacity builder we really have a coordinated and integrated approach with all community and workforce partners across institutional leadership teams to mitigate administrative barriers and leverage existing infrastructure. This has been a lot of work but I think we are making a lot of strides. As we go into things once again, we'll provide more context and detail into this piece. The community process that we are working on right now will be recruited to participate in and contribute to virtual meeting for collaboration and resource sharing to improve education and employment pathways for youth and young adults with disabilities. Finally, professional development for inclusive pedagogy and universal design provided for educational agencies services providers

and employers. This is part of what we've spent a lot of time developing the infrastructure here and so we will be excited to tell you about some of the internal audits and the work that we've done on campus to fortify the infrastructure for this.

Lets talk about OPC year one key activities. There are 6 of them that we'll focus on. Building community partner relationships, developing outreach and recruitment resources and activities. Surveying campus need for a system of technological and barrier removals. Ultimately enrolling OPC students. Preparing supplemental handles on training. Providing individualized case management to the students.

I'm going to turn it over to Meera who will talk to us a little bit about the key challenges that we've been facing in year one.

Meera Adya: Just as a reminder and for context for everybody who may not be aware. Our project years run from October 1 to September 30. We're midway in year two. We have students who since the fall of 2015 have been enrolled in the program and we are about 45-50 students right now. Key challenges that we've experience over year one and sliding into year two certainly have been establishing the formal agreements that need to be established with partners as part of the proposal writing process which I'm sure many of the other pathways projects that are joining us today can attest to. You certainly reach out to partners and get their buy in and collaboration and their support even formally documented but it's a whole other thing to start negotiating the details of those partnerships, establishing the memorandums of agreement and understanding and other partnership mechanism, you often have multiple bureaucracies coming into the mix. Sometimes challenges are nothing more then administrative and time delayed. OPC set aside it's entire first year to establishing infrastructure and requirements so students could come in during year two and hit the

ground running, and what we needed to be in place for them would be there. That is still a challenge even after a year.

We are a demonstration project; I believe many others are as well. As a demonstration project we conduct project evaluations formally for some offices but as I would say also, in order to track our programs success and in order to understand whether or not we are putting things together the way we intended and having the impact we meant for them to even through year one and two it's important for us to be able to identify information about the students. Where are they coming in from? Which recruitment pipelines are we having success with and which ones aren't we having success with? Once students are identifying needs for accommodation are they able to take those request throughout the college as they navigate their educational pathway and are those needs being met? Beyond just formally for the funder it's really important for the everyday functioning of the program that we can track these kinds of things and then immediately make improvements where necessary. One of things we've found is that whenever you have large institutions at work and then multiple institution collaborating together, everyone has their own mechanism for record keeping and putting those together in a usable, understandable and timely way can be a challenge. This is one thing we continue to navigate as a part of this project but it is coming together and what we found is that identifying key member for work groups that meet regularly around this issue has been particularly helpful.

Then of course this is a new project, it's a new way of doing business so to speak and it's transformation change taking place in our community for students with disabilities. For them to become aware of, confident in themselves and the program and avail themselves for the program and the opportunities that are offered can take time. We had a very lofty goal for our local community of 125 students per year

immediately in year one we are about a 1/3 of the way there. Recruiting has presented itself as a challenge.

Before I continue on I want to pause and see if William has joined us and wanted to add anything? I heard something but it was not William.

Are there any clarification questions from the audience? Any questions?

All right, we can move forward to the next phase of our presentation. We can talk about this community of practice this community a formal larger kickoff to our community of practice. We have mentioned it in other venues before but this is really where we are bringing together people who have an interest in this project and who may have an interest in a similar project or who are doing work with the educational systems or workforce systems that can bring to bear expertise. Our community of practice will be a capacity enhancing we hope. Coloration tools beyond just webinars. To assist with our dissemination of the project learning to learn from you to share with you and to achieve our common goals which are enhanced inclusion of students with disabilities in education programs and training programs all with an aim to career pathways in locally relevant high growth industries. As we mentioned with OPC we had a strong focus on increased employment opportunities but these really are career pathways and they are living wage jobs. Not low wage jobs where all to often individuals with disabilities can be tracked and we want this to be transformation from an early on point in the educational pathway. We want to see the process for IEP's changed so that consideration of career pathways and local opportunities are considered in high school, in middle school if possible and students are put on a path to success.

We would like to share and discuss openly all strategies all challenges, interventions learning that we're having and we hope to learn from you as well and we want a participatory stimulating discussion. We don't' want this to be a one-way venue.

Others that are joining us that I know are with us today and I hope to increase representation over time. We have representation from other New York community colleges, CUNY, Georgia's vocational rehabilitation agency joining us; I know they are looking forward to working across this community of practice as they put together their program. They are in their first year as an RSA funded pathways to careers project. We also have two other pathways to careers projects, we have Kentucky VR joining us and we have Nebraska VR joining us. There were four funded projects, Virginia as well and we hope to have them join us. Today we also have representatives from the disability employment institutive PA system. Including many others. If anyone on the phone has an inclining that there is someone on the phone doing good work or might be interested please do refer him or her and put them in touch with me. Have I left anyone out?

I am looking forward to this group and increasing this group.

I will turn it over now to Michael Morris who I believe has joined us via the phone bridge and he will talk about elements of career pathways features and our community of practice in greater detail.

Michael Morris: Thank you Meera, I do think this is a opportunity to bridge multiple efforts at a federal agency level which flows funds down to the states. We've had two rounds of the disability employment initiative with the focus on career pathways. We have the two projects that were funded as Meera mentioned just over a year and a half ago. The project at OCC and in Syracuse NY and a second project in TN. There are the four RSA projects; Georgia, Kentucky, Nebraska and Virginia. I do think there's a lot we can learn

from each other as all states begin in a few months implementation of the workforce opportunity act. We wanted to define what we see as 6 key elements of career pathways.

The first, is the building of cross agency partnerships both in terms of mandated partners within the workforce development system but other that impact the disability population; social security, Medicaid, could be the state agency providing mental health services as well as the agency involved with aiding people with disabilities including centers for independent living. We know that a key part of career pathways is the active engagement of different industry sectors who are identifying where are the growth opportunities in the future and what are the critical skill area that need to be identified and then how can community colleges and other training providers build the credentials and certification programs that creates the talent pipeline for employers. The third is designing those education programs to be inclusive, to have necessary supports for individuals with disabilities whether that is issue around accessibility of website and online learning and other supports to enable students with disabilities to be successful. Number four is about identifying funding needs and resources so that those student who are brought into a careers pathway have the supports that they need that may be supports provided by vocational rehabilitation, it may be support provided through the education or training provider or other funding streams that are going to make the difference to make sure we have a high completion rate of students entering these education certification programs. Number five is to align policies and programs for meaningful participation of individuals with disabilities so we're very interested in costumer flow the individual whether they start in VR or they start in a visit to an American jobs center and other parts of the workforce development system or a student that starts already enrolled in a community college or other institution of higher education. What is the flow of that individual to get the support they need to build the skills, build the credentials they need to be an

effective candidate for the jobs of the future. Number six is how are we going about in each of our projects to measure performance. Performance is both at an individual level in terms of credentials and of course also about employment outcomes. How are we going to look at measuring systems changes, the level of collaboration, the potential braiding of resources to make sure that the career pathways truly doesn't lead students with disabilities behind so they have equal opportunity to participate and succeed in a career pathway that responds to their interest and their talents and abilities. We know that in terms of features of career pathways that there isn't a single entry point as I just mentioned. We need to learn more and build effective customer flow. As Meera mentioned it's about building relationships and formalizing partnerships corporative agreements between the employers and workforce development systems, community colleges, VR and other support systems. We know its about looking at a assessment of interest and abilities, not just in traditional but in new ways to help an individual discover there talents and interests to see whether that can match with where the skill growth needs to take place in the future. We know we need to align with skill needs of industry so that career pathway is not just about getting a certificate or completing and educational program but it really does lead to jobs and jobs that have career focuses. We know that needs of business and workers drive workforce solutions so we as is described in the workforce innovation opportunity act there are two costumers. The employer is a customer, businesses and the job seeker is a customer. We need to look at with career pathways how both are being supported and having needs met and that increasingly skilled workers are developed with the support of the workforce development system.

In term of a definition of career pathways it's about aligning skill needs of industries and the economy of the state or regional economy involved, it's preparing an individual to be successful in any of the full range of secondary or post secondary education options

including partnership. It includes counseling to support and individual in achieving the individual's education and career goals. It includes as appropriate education offers with and in in the same context as other workforce preparation active and training for specific occupation or other occupational cluster and then finally it's about organizing education training and other services to meet the particular needs of an individual with a disability in a way that accelerates the educational and career advancement of the individual to the extent practicable. It's also about enabling an individual to obtain even before you look at credential programs. Helping the individual begin or advance within a specific occupation or occupational cluster

Those are some of the element that I know as the four project funded by RSA get going these are going to be critical issues for you these have been critical issues for OCC and students with disabilities as they have been enrolled working with the workforce development system and some of the other colorations that are part of that project.

What we see and hope we can do and want to talk about is how this community of practice can serve these multiple projects including the rsa funded and ODA funded and also the degree and level of interest as many of the DEI projects that focused on career pathways. We know as we have been saying today it's about building partnerships. Developing nurturing and growing these partnerships. Employers, workforce development boards being involved the workforce professionals and education and community partners. What other community partners and other service delivery systems need to be a part of the customer flow. We want to look at resource mapping. What public and private resources are you brining into your project, what your doing might be helpful to some of the other projects that will joining on this call. We want to learn more about how employers and business industry are engaged in identifying the skill competencies and matching those into education and training programs that make sense. We want ultimately, to developed and

validate career ladders to look at the flexibility in the education and training methods that are employed and to understand more what type of reasonable accommodations were needed so that students with disabilities stay in the educational program, that they don't drop out and are getting the support that they need. Other topics we want to look at is what changes in policy or program design become evident based on the students becoming enrolled and getting the supports that they needed. We want to look at the performance measurements as required under the workforce innovation oppurtunity act with both youth and adult programs. We truly are seeing gains in people's educational attainment and also in terms of employment outcomes. Ultimately what this learning community is about is peer learning. I don't think there are any questions that should be considered off limits. No one should feel intimated that well I'm not sure this is a good question. There are no bad questions. Hopefully together we can be involved together in problem solving together in challenges that are identified in you individual projects as well as also learn from each other in identification of promising strategies. Then as we get multiple years out how do we do this in more then the small scale we are working? How do we sustain what are the gains for youth and young adults with disabilities gaining new levels of education attainment but of course also gaining the career pathways, the jobs that really have advancement potential. That's what we would like to do. We know that the four VR projects have already had some group calls. We know DDI and DEI training and TA team has to manage the support and assistance to particularly the last two rounds of DEI state projects that have been awarded, but what we are hoping is we don't want to take the place of anything else although if people think maybe this one learning community can serve all these projects we're open to that we just want to be an open forum. We need to decide how often we would like to meet. I might suggest maybe every other month, but we want to really open back up to you in terms of we want to make this something meaningful

not burdensome where can share challenges, problem solve together and also learn about promising stragegies.

 So let me stop there and see if there are any questions, which were put forward while I've been speaking, or if not let me open to questions.

Meera opens the line.

Attendee: I'm not able to mute my phone so I've been trying to be quiet. This is Helga Gelder. I'm from the Kentucky office for the blind. We are one for those career pathway grants one of the four states. When you ask how you think this learning community could be helpful I jotted down a few things that came to mind immediately. One was the sharing of material that we might all produce in working with the high school age participants and in recruiting them. Also I'm interested in understanding how you all are thinking about having a web presence. We have not had that four states phone call yet. We are planning it for March 1st.

Michael Morris: This is Michael reacting and I think that a web-based space would be great where we could post materials from the different projects. There are probably a lot of shortcuts from things already—particularly the OCC project, the Syracuse project is a year ahead of the RSA project by one year. The DEI funded states are in different stages in terms of looking at what they are doing related to individuals with disabilities and career pathways. Recruitment has been mentioned as a challenge. That's probably a topic we could focus on perhaps the next calls. Without the students without the pipeline we wont' have success. I know with OCC there isn't one-way recruitment is being done; much has to do with the partnerships and relationships being built with the school. Learning more about what strategies are being used and which are more effective then others is a really important topic. I will tell you a second one related to that is

just because you get the student enrolled doesn't mean the student stays in. This is the whole set of issues surrounded around supports not all of which relate to education but other needs which the students have to cause them to drop out. Recruitment and retention are two really important topics at the front end.

Anyone else?

Attendee: Michael this is Alex Shelby. Hi, I'm with the DCI technical assistance project but I just wonder if there is an outreach to the many DRC's disability resource coordinators, that were installed through the New York state DEI project and that are often still in place being supported to get the work revenues that have been in place in the sate. Secondly, I wanted to also mention that DTA maintains an innovation and opportunity network website which is designed very similar along your lines of sharing both practices on a peer to peer level and state to sate and providing examples of successful strategies so that may not be something you want to look to at this point but it would certainty be an avenue for dissemination as you move forward.

Miranda: Michael this is Miranda and Hi Alex, I'm glad you mentioned all of that. I'm going to be out in New York next meeting with the round six projects. Our very first meeting with those groups. We will also be having a meeting with the round four leadership. I've been thinking about that while looking at this presentation.

Michael Morris: ---- We can talk offline. I know New York with it's many rounds of DEI funding moves around with where they focus but I think round six is – inaudieable.

Miranda --- and actually all three rounds for New York are adult focused.

Michael Morris: Absolutely and back to Alex's comment, central NY works, William would probably be able to talk more about it. I think they were a part of round 4.

Miranda: I think that was round 1.

Michael Morris: I think there was some engagement with them. But really the whole shift of the WIOA both for VR and the larger system, this is the big shift from WIA to WIOA. Career pathways is a major change, and we have a new definition for the first time of career services, you have a move away from sequential delivery of services, and it really will be interesting to see what all this is about is making sure that youth or adults are not left out of opportunity that are being created with community career pathways. Things that we learn thru the group meetings we can bring over into the ION network that ETA has and I know we've talked about really populating more promising practices related to individuals with disabilities on that site.

Anyone else?

I'm just going to ask, I'm curious in terms of Georgia, Nebraska and Kentucky who I think are on the call, whether – again the project is so new – does the issue of recruitment and retaining students in career pathways programs resonate with you as a key topic to focus on for next time?

Helga: Yes I think that would be a great topic for next time. I think that retaining in – so we've had brief collaboration with an innovation program in Kentucky career and technical education program in most of the colleges around the state and it is accelerating opportunities. Accelerating opportunities allows a student how is still earning a GED to also enroll in courses and have an adult ed teacher in the room along with a technical teacher and then it provides some more of those outside supports that are so important and when we learned

abut this program I thought it was perfect for helping us in our endeavors while and working with them and knowing them better I see the challenges they have in retaining students. We've piloted the pilot. We have one student from Louisville institution for the blind who's actually enrolled in this semester through accelerated opportunities and their career pathways which is a health pathway. It's had so much insight into that retention issue. I would love to talk about that more. I think that's what these projects are all about, what are those barriers that keeps stopping us.

Excellent, Anyone else?

Good morning this is Zach from Nebraska. We've reached out to 12,000 former VR clients. That's our main focus right now for the first year. We aren't doing any recruitment at the high school level yet. Just updating you on that.

Michael--- that's an interesting approach, you're going back into your own case files to identify potential individuals that would them go into the educational programs you have.

Correct, we have a list about 12,000 individuals that programs were formally successful with VR in the last three year. In the areas we are working on we are reaching out and recruiting them right now.

This Dale Arnold with Georgia, I can agree with the topics of recruitment and retention especially with regards to the out of school youth. How to find them and how to recruit them whether they are out of school and in school retention is incredibly important too so any strategies or successes with that would be really be interesting to talk about.

Excellent okay let me watch the time. Again, I think we accomplished several things today. We wanted to introduce the possibility of creating this learning committee which we proposed could meet every other month. Ideally this could be something opened up to some of the DEI states, the four RSA funded projects and the two ODEPT projects in Syracuse and TN and each time pick a core topic to focus on for the next call. We can look at creating a web presence and look to share material and we are also open to just hearing from you in terms of other additional people or projects that may want to be a part of this. You can send any of your thoughts about any of this to Meera we'll be interested to hear, we'll touch base with the RSA projects after your first call on March 1st. We also want to try to work through ODEPT, ETA and RSA, the funders to see would they feel comfortable with this mega cross agency community of practice that could focus on career pathways for youths and young adults and we'll get more feedback from them as well. Meera is there anything else you would like to add as well?

No I think you've covered it, I just want to say more about other about others interested we would be willing to do outreach. I like the core group that has come together and is focused on pathways to careers we want to highlight broadly speaking that even if elements of our models were adopted by institutions around the country that would be a wonderful outcome for students with disabilities everywhere. Progress doesn't have to be about getting a large injection of funding and doing a big demonstration project. Our colleagues that aren't funded across our state or in neighboring states who may be great to participate and make whatever incremental changes they can by learning about what we're doing. So please include tem in your thoughts when coming up with folks to recommend.