

June 29, 2017

Onondaga Pathways to Careers Community of Practice - Career Exploration

Attendees:

Groups: DEI, WINTAC, OPC, OCC, Nebraska, Kentucky, and SEADA

Individuals: Helga, Barry, Dave, Meera, Michael, Janice, Doug, Nicky, and William

Meera: Welcome everybody to our Onondaga Pathway to Careers demonstration project community of practice around career pathways so glad to have you with us.

There is not new information to present from OPC itself. If you recall our last meeting, we discussed career exploration and some of the work-based learning strategies that are being planned for the upcoming season at OCC because we are moving the focus to employment related strategies. William will give a quick refresher of the conversation we had last time and then the rest of my slides really are focused on the other states that are joining us. We do have WINTAC and those who are provide TA to the DEI States. If you know about any of their practices, we definitely love to have you share them. I have a couple of slides for Nebraska. This is a great opportunity for us to go a little deeper in with Nebraska and it would be wonderful to hear more about what you are doing.

So scratch number one through three states or ODEP, but we definitely have Nebraska, DEITA, and WINTAC with us. We will share the recording with everyone so that they can catch up.

A brief recap: I condensed our slides on best practices down to one. The strategies really run from outreach/prior to being a part of the OPC program formally, all the way through the students' tenure at OCC as a part of the program, and to graduation. I think that this represents a nice approach to things. This is clearly a career pathways project from their perspective. They are going to talk to you about what they can do for you in those terms and get you thinking about it before you even decide that you want to enroll and be a part of the program by heading down that path. I really look forward to digging in with Nebraska and hearing about some DEI States.

A real quick recap of college career exploration best practices. The National Council on workforce and disability/youth have talked about this in their work in their guideposts, particularly the guidepost for success number two. They remind us that career exploration

activities will let the user identify their interests values and skills rather than having a nebulous idea of what they might want to do and why it focuses them. It helps them understand what, specifically, are the skills and activities associated with the careers and what training they need to be successful in pursuing those careers. I think many times we know about types of jobs, but we really do not think about it in a career way. We really do not think about the specifics of what you have to do. This is something with which William and others OPC can certainly relate. For example, they have had some experience with students coming in for Computer Information Programs where they think that they want to be game designers and they want to do certain things. However, when they look more deeply into what it is that they have to learn and do for it, they think about a different approach or a pathway to take. Therefore, it is definitely important, before they go too far down the rabbit hole, to help them understand what it is they are thinking about doing and what that means.

Certainly, we have also found that there are great outcomes. Rather than just being focused, they have higher career search self-efficacy. So they feel more empowered to be able to do those things. They are more engaged in actually setting goals and attending school. They think that they will do better and that motivation often leads them to persist and actually succeed. So it really is important to move the needle on that motivation piece before you actually getting to actions and outcomes on their on their part. And, as I mentioned, the guidepost for success number two focuses on this. It is important and I know I've seen studies for it. Mathematica and others have also said it is really important to get secondary post-secondary use into lifelong learning opportunities into career experiences and work based experiences because these are really strong predictors of success when it comes to employment outcomes. Youth need to understand the relationship between benefit planning and career choices. That benefits planning becomes a big deal when it comes to understanding what work can I do, how long can I work, is this career going to be meaningful and worth the risk, attention potentially to existing benefits opportunities that I have or programs that I'm on.

It is important to help to help them learn how to communicate their disability related work support and accommodation needs. This is something that, in our work with Georgia's career pathways project, we've been helping them with, teaching the youth, providing curriculum that can help teach the youth about the ADA and Self-Advocacy. Both, in educational and in the work settings, how do you approach work, get accommodations, understand which one you might even need, and open conversation about your disability. This is a lot of information that often the youth do not have or they do not have experience with. This is something that

definitely can be helpful to support students and teach them how they can learn to find, formally request, and secure the support they need again. Whether it is in employment or whether it is in the education and training things.

William: A quick recap for the OPC: This is a pathway that begins well before students come to OCC and carries through their experience here and into their time in the workforce when they leave of OCC. Career exploration is key to all of this. We know that with this population of young persons, that it's ideas about what career path is right for them can be changing fairly rapidly and so as much a career exploration, assessments, and self-exploration that the students can do really is beneficial.

We do begin our outreach in this respect with high school students who have disabilities as young as being in the ninth grade (14 or 15 years old). This is done through our recruiting specialist who travels all over central New York to various school districts by invitation to sit down with classes and to walk them through some very basic starting points. We use the career coach tool. It is a robust system that is free to the public and we have an arrangement with the providers of this resource to have all of the information in the career coach tool linked through the OCC sites. It is actually geared to specifically target the academic programs and careers that are possible through OCC. That way when students start to begin to explore things and get interested in things they can see that OCC does offer courses and degrees and certificates to in things that interest them.

Another thing we do regularly is through our scholars program, which is our group of young persons with disabilities, who are in their final year of high school. We just celebrated a couple weeks ago our graduation of twenty of our scholars who finished the program and all of whom have been enrolled in OCC. They had a range of majors that when they began the Scholars Program they were primarily interested in technology-based fields or in our one non-technology focused area, which has been hospitality management. Then through the course of the Scholars program with the rise of career exploration activities, some of them changed their minds. They saw something that was more attractive to them or perhaps better with their skillset or interests and they adjusted their focus accordingly. This was great for us to see and we support these students regardless of whether they stay in one of the original tracks that they indicate. Once they come to OCC, they are a part of the program and we will continue working with them in whatever particular career goals they happen to have.

We have spoken briefly about the career coach tool, the interface that you see at OCC and different ways you can go into the system to get specific information.

Once students are at OCC, they have a variety of opportunities to explore and expand their career interests and abilities. A couple of these areas include the leadership skills that come through being a peer mentor. This year, we are recruiting ten students into this particular program. We have had five peer mentors in the past year, but we see an opportunity to expand this. There has been a lot of interest. These students take some leadership responsibilities in setting events for other students in the program and they work with staff in delivering various workshops. They have also gone off site with staff to some of the local schools to share their personal experiences as a part of the OPC project with younger students who may be interested in this. The other big area is our workplace learning opportunities and by having brought on more recently a couple of students success coordinators who have a substantial focus upon supporting students in their career preparation and the addition of our career readiness coach, we have really honed down more heavily on our career preparation.

In regard to this information, those questions indicated that the career readiness coach and the students success coordinators work individually with students in terms of doing career readiness assessments in terms of developing soft skills. They also do activities in various groups through workshops and seminars and through their learning communities. We are working with staff in our workforce division to further develop our work based learning opportunities.

About a month ago, a number of students went off site and visited various employers where they were able to follow around people in different areas. That was a very successful event and it is just one of the things that we are continuing to do as well as well as prepare students for more intense work based learning.

The people that work directly with students use this individualized career action plan with students where they can help set up specific goals and objectives, short and long term. This allows students to meet with the staff, to make progress on, and use the particular events and workshops of the program to complete these various tasks.

Meera: Other members, how do you align yourself with your youth with career pathways and use career exploration? The other thing that we wanted to talk about, due to the president's executive order, which we sent out with our reminder email, is if any of you are

sponsoring/hosting/connecting with as a part of your career pathways programs apprenticeship programs or whether they are just in any way a part of your work. Whether there may be an opportunity to connect here with the career path project, which is something that looks like it might be topical for the next couple of years.

I have a slide for everyone. I just went through and looked at your project websites to understand a little bit more about what you were doing. I was hoping you could tell us about it. What your core strategies are to make sure that students think about career exploration and we are very focused on those employment experiences and employment outcomes.

Helga: We are doing very similar things as the previous speaker. Talking about, in general, what career clusters are and then specifically about the sectors that we are focusing on and our career pathways. We have six career pathway coordinators who have been going into the classrooms. They have been doing a wonderful job, not just interfacing with the special Ed teachers and those classrooms, but also in a bigger sense working with educational operatives, superintendents, to have standalone stem camps. We have done two of those and we have some more planned for the fall. Then also going on right now, you can look at our Facebook page that is a plus for our project. The Facebook page has some lovely photos up there. Additionally, another group pathway coordinator in Kentucky found out that there were going to be some exciting opportunities during the summer and made sure that she pointed them out students so they knew about those.

Its nice partnerships and I think we are going to be seeing a lot more of that as we move into the fall because I think we have really laid the groundwork for showing up at all these meetings. Really being part of the educational cooperative, understanding what their mission is and how much it aligns, and just making sure that we're getting our students where the action and some standalone things. We are working hard to try to understand how apprenticeship can work and pre-apprenticeship. We know that, for example, in Kentucky that there is such an emphasis on apprenticeship. They have hired two or three people to be, similar to our career pathway coordinators, apprenticeship staff who have come at our invitation and spoken at our workforce center about apprenticeships. They have shared with us how we can turn some of the work that goes on there, the instruction that goes on there, and how it can look like the classroom part of an apprenticeship.

In Easter Kentucky, with the water board, the utility companies have been hiring here and there some summer jobs for youths. Now they are working with up skilling current employees and trying to bring on new employees that have skills. They decided to work with the

community college (five counties together) and I am so proud. Our clear pathway coordinator said that could look like an apprenticeship, and we should bring apprenticeship into this discussion. The apprenticeship group meet with just this past week the water boards and the community college to make it an actual registered apprenticeship.

Sometimes we do work like that. Sometimes we do The Open Pathway so we do not have a student in it now, but you can be sure that when we will we will make sure that our students are aware of these opportunities and can move into them.

In addition, we are doing camps here during July at our Office for the Blind. We are closing the center to adults and only have students. I have a career pathway coordinator speaking at that. They will be doing a classroom kind of exposure, but also bringing in three or four employers to meet with the students. They will also get to tour UPS.

Meera: Some of the same things that OPC does bringing employers in and taking students to employers. That is great.

Helga: I hope that is the focus of the next year on the grant, where there is a lot more on work based learning experience and employer engagement.

Meera: And these come apprenticeship staff (two to three), are they still there they are part of your career pathways program?

Helga: They are not, but we have made sure to try to include them as much as possible and really open those lines of communication. They are through the registered apprenticeship program, which is actually department of labor in Kentucky.

Meera: That is great coordination between the VR and the workforce development system, some of our WINTAC folks and others on the line, can certainly speak to this idea of collaboration and partnership and integration being so important.

Helga: We you know we certainly feel like we want to get we want to our place at the table and the best way to do that is not this one time communicating, but keep going back and back to make sure we really become an integrated part of the initiatives that are happening.

Dave: Are you from education sector or VR?

Helga: Yes, VR.

Dave: How is the connection that you have with the education sector in the areas of making

those alignments with the existing career pathways projects?

Helga: I feel like the Grant goes in a few different directions and one of the directions is to train our own staff to understand what career pathways looks like in Kentucky and the career tech Ed component of it. They provide career counseling to younger and younger individuals because of WEOA. To really make sure that they understand the resources that are available at that student's high school and to be a part of Career Tech Ed as early as possible. I have on our on our grant advisory team, I have Career Tech Ed and they have presented for me a couple times. Then, it has happened organically, where I mean that we have requested to speak at the educational cooperative. We have requested to just to speak and to show up at these different meetings at school meetings and school staff meetings just to have a few moments to talk about what we do. That has led to having a lot more access and to do exciting things like the stem camps.

Dave: I was try to talk it through this is one of the barriers that we see. Staged and we are all working with two that are. A number of goals projects that are also working towards the cost. You have to be able to get to a place where they are actually at the table with the career path. Where you get administrators, the people who are actually going to spreading the programs in local areas, that's part of the what I would asking about and I've found that These partners.

Helga: That they understand that they you know what they need to serve all students, and so if you make it easier for them to serve all students. You are that person who is going to provide that expertise and be able to bring them to students and provide support and explain to them what support you can provide .They typically welcome that. It is part of their goals to make sure that they are being inclusive. Sometimes they just do not know how to do that, so they might be looking for you.

Dave: Coming up with the benefit of having your expertise and resources to know what is already there brings you to the table instead of being an ancillary or tertiary part of their career properties post directionally partner. Your primary partner in helping them build a system.

Helga: Exactly and that's why I don't think it's wasted time to really be part of that apprenticeship program or for the other types of work we do. They do not specifically serve only our consumers, but they are serving everyone and the opening pathways does make a similar valuable partner. We have sat with those people we have done little projects with and people you know.

DOUG: I am with WINTAC and a particular area focused for one of the teams that I am on is with regard to the service alignment. The service integration within the workforce system or the American job centers. You know I really enjoyed what I have read about the idea career pathways, in the structure of it. As a vehicle for alignment of services and programs to meet the needs of business associates as you have been describing. The very basic focus on the business sectors in the role of the workforce, development boards, and the leadership of the corps partners in every state to develop that. The feedback I have gotten from folks that have attended the National meetings, is the idea of what Career Pathways has this kind of like "big foot" talk about it, but so few people ever see. I talk to different people they seem to have a slightly different perception of the approach or how to make an operation on the ground, which is why I appreciate your sharing the work that you're doing. I am curious as you approach this with your colleagues in Kentucky, what type of model did you use or is that something that you created or did you consult with other folks in developing your approach.

Helga: As soon as we got the grant and I knew absolutely nothing about career pathways. My supervisor, wisely, suggested I go to the National Career Pathway Network conference, which was in Dallas. Then I started looking up as many resources I could find and so I hooked onto the tool kit put out by the O.L. and I think we, collaboratively, shaped how we proceeded. The big lesson I learned quickly was, I understood what career pathways were, but the granting exists because no one has figured out how to integrate pathways specifically. For example, what all those gaps and barriers are. Each looks a little different, so working with the individuals we serve especially the states that are in order selection and serving only category one. How can we still make this guide for our counselors because this really is the new lens to look through for providing case management services. So that's what guided us and then, and still guides us. The basic principles of what career pathways are, these entry points and exit points. This is so I can explain it to counselors and trying to enroll appropriate participants. We have gone through the weeds on this, so in explaining it to counselors, many of the individuals we work with have absolutely nothing on their resume. Your typical career pathway job, why the job is not something that we would consider an entry-level job. We want to have an industry recognized certificate and the training that has gone into that. I think that what we have seen with some of the consumers that we serve, is that if we can give them an industry recognized certificate or relevant certificate. Maybe there is not one of those Department of Labor yet and that may be our entry point is a different point. This is still so valuable because a rehab counselor who might go straight to job placement, but with the grant we have been able to step in and say, what about using our partners to go through this

two week or four week training first. It comes out with different certificates. There is an OSHA ten certificate, you learn about learn manufacturing, and you learn the terminology of manufacturing. It is not an industry-recognized certificate they end up with. We have provided them a true step on a career pathway and I think that is what it looks like for vocational rehab, finding those valuable relevant certificates. Changing the approach of the rehab counselor to not go straight to placement but to say what can I give them first that's going to really give them a leg up and allows them to progress. Then with other others of our consumers, it is that nice easy path of career pathways where we send them to college or they go to career tech Ed in high school, and they matriculate right into the community college keeps them going or they're able to get a welding certificate and things like that. I think those are the easy ones. It is a tricky one for those students that one of our careers halfway coordinators want to focus on this coming year. Those students that are actually in some career tech Ed classes but they are not going to receive a high school diploma. They are going to receive an alternate diploma however and she has located about twelve of them across the counties twelve students who do really well (get A's and B.'s) in that vocational class. They are not going to be able to get an industry-recognized certificate out of it because of their reading or math skills, their academic skills they are not even end up with a high school diploma. How can we serve them? They have some skills, but it is going to look different so I think that is what the grant is really all about.

Doug: Do you ever run into any questions with informed choice. I think sometimes focus on LMI or career pathways that are available in a region, from the perception of some folks, might appear to narrow choices. Other people see having that good information about what is available and what is needed for pursuing careers in the region is actually better information to shape choice. Have any of your career counselors struggled with questions around choices.

Helga: Yeah right at the beginning when we first did our first statewide back training that was a question. I love that question because I think that with the direction you were headed with it, we are actually opening a lot more options. We are presenting a lot more possibilities. We just created these charts for counselors to work from. That sort of shows what the top jobs in each of our three sectors. We have to update every season to show what the top jobs are, what they pay, which companies are actually hiring in your area if you get this type of nursing degree or this type of packer at a manufacturing facility versus one of the other positions. So it is all laid out and there are many options. Well one thing came up just recently actually. An individual said is this person eligible for a grant they need the resources to be able to take this exam for CPR and I said OK. Was there is there an IPE? Was their employment goal in health

care? No, she wants to work in daycare and I said have we talked to her about jobs other than that. Is that a job she came to and said this is what I want to do, and have you said well that is a great job and it sounds like you are interested in these types of things. You want to take care of children and you are nurturing and did you know that there are all the other jobs, in this cluster that you might be interested in thinking about. I wonder if you know what you can do. Is it just a one-year training? So trying to get counselors to expand out and open that big range of possibilities. I am now almost feel like it is an ethical violation not to talk about what is out there.

Meera: Thank you Helga. That was fantastic. I really appreciate you going into that and I will go to you next time too. Any other questions for Helga?

NIKI: I am from the national disability institute and on the WINTAC team as well. Helga, we are going to be doing a career pathway presentation on July 21 as a live training. Dave is involved in that as well. We are creating another community a practice. This one works collaboratively with workforce. I am thinking you know we would love to have you be part of that, if you have any interest because we are really trying to bring the VR agencies and the other core partners together to work on streamlining and integration and discussion you have been talking about.

Helga: I would like to be part of that. I have to check my schedule though, but maybe we can talk email.

NIKI: OK I will grab your email and send you a message or something and yeah OK Super Thank you.

MEERA: OK thank you and thanks Doug for your good questions. I see that you are going to have to pay a fee. Doug just left us and left a little note in the chat but it was great to have a there and I know we have many others from WINTAC were still covered. I have moved forward to Nebraska but I skipped past Virginia and I just want to make sure you did not ding in when I was not noticing. OK well then, Zack and Janet, we would love to hear from you about your career pathways advanced project. I did put in the next slide this fantastic chart you had that sort of mapped out career options in a way that, you know progress is along a pathway although I'm not sure it's that wonderful to look at. So I am going to let you start and then maybe you can help us just understand what the chart that we can read is supposed to say.

Janet: Well I am sure. Zack, do you have this slide open? I was not able to open mine I actually was on the road and just got back.

Zack: I was having a hard opening mine as well but I think she is referencing the breakdown of like high school diploma, certificate license, and bachelor's degree this kind of bypass.

Janet: First, I was able to agree with so many things Helga was saying. When they were asking about informed choice. That is crucial I think to any of the career pathways. I think informed choice is a part of that we really encourage our career pathway recruiters like Zack and other recruiters. I know the other grants or the other C.P.I. the grant have really looked at informed choice for their clients, getting them involved in something and helping them understand the whole entering into an exit in points. Stackable credentials is all about informed choice. We are not working so much with transitions; we are work through a transition student's graduate in the last couple of years. What we are doing is up-skilling those clients who are currently have been closed except in the career pathways. The decimated career pathways of I.T manufacturing T.D.L. Now we have added health care and construction in the last quarter. We are calling those clients, to see if they would like to obtain some credentials within their career path, to make them more marketable. I think many of you know we are back filling with those when they move up in their pathway then they are back we are backfilling with one of our other clients. One of the things that Helga is that that made me aware of V.R. and how Career Pathways worked in V.R. What we have found were encouraging clients to look at career pathways, but the clients that have been closed in the last number of years that were contacting, a lot of them were finding may not even want to stay in the same career pathways. They were looking at, that we have a three percent unemployment rate in Nebraska right now. So what the people are wanting you know they are coming in, they are looking at how to feed their families, and they need a job. They are getting into a particular area. So calling them now to help them up skill within that same path or maybe they say I know I have some work skills, I got some work experience now, and I would like to move into a different career pathway. We are doing a lot with that right now. That chart that you have up really we are using to the Department Education. The chart that helps people see, even training our own V.R. staff like that it tells you the mentioned about how can we move people up, what are stackable credentials, that you don't have to start with the bachelor degree or associate degree and what may be available. We have been working a lot with employers, and employers are telling us the same thing that we are willing to help train if you can get people who can come to work on time. Even have OSHA certification and many of the certifications that they have, even one of those are important. Zack got a new role that he is just started, and that we are excited about it. We have always been our grant to engage past clients and upscaling them and then working with employers. Zack's full time job for the next month to

six weeks will be going out to employers, and engaging employers to help them work with their employees, who have disabilities to help them up-skill within that business. We are also doing ergonomic assessments with those businesses, and that has been a real key to help get into those businesses. Also, for them to understand what we consider someone with a disability, because usually look at someone with an observable disability. People do not realize that many of their staff already have disabilities, and we can help up-scale them. So we have marketing materials to help do that. We are also meeting with a lot of their staff, during their staff meetings to talk about this possibility that if they would like to obtain an additional training or credentials in order to move up within their company and they have a disability the VR can help cover that cost. So Zack what else you have to do you have in my mind.

Zach: I just wanted to add to what Helga and Janet was saying. Janet mention that we do a lot of company tours, evaluation, and informational interviews. Things of that nature to really help the clients understand the opportunities that are available and to make the choice. I am glad you mentioned that because we are really trying to do those things. We are trying to advance incoming workers as well within these pathways. Also, we trying to back-fill that position once the client has advanced, and back-fill is a regular VR program with the clients. The aim is to have the employers on board and to be a part of the conversation with the client, so they understand the grant and process, and the benefits to them of retaining talent and not have additional talent coming in.

Janet: I think we are also have a contract with power of education. When Helga was talking, I was taking notes too. Their goal is to educate D.L.L., educate V.R staff, and school counselors on what is a clear pathway. One of the things we found is employers are willing to have our V.R. staff take two or more parents, any of our client take two their business or do it for many interviews. In fact I just set up a tour for our one of our teams today because I met when I started looking like one of the areas we covered manufacturing. I did not realize how much manufacturing has changed in the last ten or twenty years. What the difference in the clean environment is things like that, it's important anything we do to get parents out there, students out there, and even our own staff who are writing those helping providing informed choice. They cannot provide informed choice if they are not informed. I think our goal also is make sure we are helping our staff understand what all the technology changes in the last many years, what occupations are looking like?

Meera: That is interesting that is a good point that, we start talking to people about these career paths they may have perceptions of them that at this point are dated. So their interests

you know may be driven by out-of-date information. If they knew what it looked like now that might their interest a little bit more. It is really good point.

Janet: We are doing some virtual tours. I think Helga mention too the virtual tours. Our department of education has those things out there. We send those out, but you know I think you always have to be in the forefront of the staff and want to help them understand. You know their workload. They have many things to be going on, so unless you are always talking to them about career pathways it slips their mind.

Meera: I would love to learn more about some of what you describe Zack will be doing. You know the idea of how you are going into workplaces to talk to existing employees, and say that you can upscale them. The idea of doing ergonomic assessments for them, I imagine a great entree in/with employers. I think it might be worthwhile to continue this conversation at our next meeting. I hope that we will have some more folks who can join us here because your program is really unique in this approach. I think it portends great lessons for the rest of us. Last minute that we have, I just want to mention one other item, which was that we are hoping to actually bring all of us together, physically, in a place to have a little meeting and conference of our own and talk much more in-depth than we can in these brief interludes that we have every few months. Right now, we are looking at some dates, in the very beginning of September. So I just wanted to put that out there and see if everyone could check their calendars. I will follow up with an e-mail out to our list service. You can let me know if that works for you were not. Those of you on the call you can certainly think about it. There is some funding available to help support travel. We would like to have it here in Syracuse, New York at OCC. It allow you to meet with many of the staff associated with that program. Just a nice opportunity for us all to get together and maybe have somewhat of a richer discussion.

Janet: I would really love it. I would really love that and my only comment. The VR has very large programs the national program evaluation conference on September 6th and 7th in Omaha.

Meera: We are so interested in having you. That really is that is good information and I will take that back to our team, and see what dates we can try to work out. To void that maybe make it a little bit easier for you to make it to here. We really appreciate you joining us.

Janet: I was not sure if that is going to include any of the other C.P.I. do you participants Virginia and Kentucky I do not know who they will be sending but was my concerns well.

Meera: Now, we are absolutely at the end of our hour. I really appreciate everyone joining us.

Let us follow the conversation online, if we need to. Please do feel free to use a listener.