ADVOCATING FOR WAGE INCREASES
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“Rule #1: never ask for a raise during hard times.
Rule #2: It’s always a hard time somewhere.”
INITIALLY I WAS APPREHENSIVE TO PURSUE THE INCREASE

Due to:
1. Being in the midst of the workshop transformation
   • closing the work centers
   • repurposing former work shop space into small business incubator pods & incurring a lot of expenses
   • future funding such as the LTSE and county funding becoming more tentative
2. Being told no
   • Negatively impact morale
   • Devaluing the coaches & department
   • Stymie my future plans to pursue increase for office manager and job developers
   • Time consuming & a lot of work

REASONS TO PURSUE THE INCREASE

• Gross disparity between the Job Coaches responsibilities and wage
• Enhanced training requirements since the redesign and the new CRS contract
• Retention issues
• Persistent vacancies
• Need to attract more skilled applicants
• Improve morale
• Enhanced level of sophistication & professionalism required
• Level of scheduling flexibility not required in any other agency position
• SEMP rate robust enough to support an increase
3 STEP APPROACH TO MY ADVOCACY EFFORTS

1. Decrease/eliminate departmental deficits
2. Educate executive team on the role of the job coach
3. Illustrate how it will be accomplished & highlight the benefits
DECREASE/ELIMINATE DEPARTMENTAL DEFICITS

1. Review P & Ls and have a plan to reduce or eliminate any contract/enclave/business that operates with a deficit
   • Renegotiated many contracts;
     o Some contracts ended because not fiscally sound
     o Some business elected to hire individuals from the enclave as employees and the contracts ended
   • Closed businesses that were losing money
2. Review budget and eliminate/reduce costs where possible
   • Monitor use of cell phones & chrome books / cancel if not in use
   • Rearrange caseloads to manage mileage

Remember that it is not prudent to ask for an increase in your salary cost center if your program is in deficit.

EDUCATE EXECUTIVE TEAM ON THE ROLE OF THE JOB COACH

1. Created a comprehensive list of job coach responsibilities and expectations
   • Keep in mind that they may not be as versed in the role of a job coach as they are regarding a Residential or Day Hab staff.

2. Created a chart illustrating the difference in tasks among the three job coach positions present within our agency.
   • The increase is specific to SEMP job coaches only.
JOB COACH RESPONSIBILITIES & EXPECTATIONS

- Knowledge of regulatory requirements for ACCES-VR & its various programs (Supportive Employment, Direct Placement, youth programs, etc.), OPWDD Extended and its various employment programs (Pathways, ETP, Discovery, etc.) plus the rules/billing for individual and group placements
- Awareness of payment mechanisms for each funding source (ACCES-VR and OPWDD)
- Must multi-task and be able to switch between different programs and funding sources through the course of a day. Caseloads are diverse comprised of individual involved in different funding sources.
- Teach job tasks – adapt teaching style to accommodate different learning styles/modalities – be able to breakdown tasks and train person to be able to perform the tasks to business’s quality specifications - create task analysis
- Knowledge of tech and adaptive equipment/materials to assist individuals with performing job tasks

JOB COACH RESPONSIBILITIES & EXPECTATIONS

- Documentation – become versed with paperwork associated with ACCES-VR’s numerous programs (Supported Employment, Direct Placement, Youth programs and many other new services starting with the 2018 contract) and OPWDD’s programs (Intensive, ETP, Discovery, Extended and Pathways) Each program/service has different paperwork requirements for each. Some are milestone based and some are hourly.
- Document services contemporaneously in narrative form. Must describe the service provided and the individual’s response. This must be articulated clearly and concisely. Must record correct group count.
- Writing staff action plans and updating in accordance with program’s regulatory requirements, mark staff action plan as updated and date sent to Care Manager
- Billing – tracking and managing their hours to maximize billing. It is expected that a minimum of 30 hours worked by a job coach be performing billable activities.
JOB COACH RESPONSIBILITIES & EXPECTATIONS

- Assist individuals with adapting to the social demands of the work place. Develop/teach strategies for the development of soft skills, stress management and navigating workplace rules, etc.
- Must become familiar with many different business policies, protocols, hierarchies, tasks, quality standards, etc.
- Perform the actual work tasks when needed especially when pacing for the person is an issue and a specific quota is expected by the business
- Work a flexible schedule/hours – schedule can change from week to week reflecting the work schedules of the people supported.
- Effective communication – must communicate with person supported, their team members, their supervisor, family members, co-workers and funding sources.
- Work independently, problem solve, think critically and foresee potential issues, etc.
- Development and use of natural supports

- Familiarity with local transit system to be able to train people how to use it effectively and applying for paratransit
- Rudimentary knowledge of benefits and how income can have an impact
- Use of own vehicle to travel from one site to another and to transport people. Also may need to drive agency vehicle.
- Create resumes, fill out job applications, conduct mock interviews, develop reference lists, etc.
- Develop and facilitate discovery and job readiness activities
- Adhere to the professional training requirements by OPWDD (24 hours of Innovations training first year after hire and 6 hours of training thereafter for professional development) ACCES-VR has a similar requirement for all staff in SEMP.
Job Coach Variations in Responsibilities

**Work Center**

- **Supported Employment**
  - Fixed schedule M-F / holidays off
  - Fixed caseload
  - No OPWDD training requirement / New regulations strongly suggest
  - No travel requirement
  - Van certification not required
  - Communicates with individuals, manager communicates with team, family, Care Manager, etc.
  - Bills according to attendance and goals

- **School to Work/Enrich**
  - Fixed schedule M-F / holidays off
  - Caseloads change
  - No OPWDD training requirement
  - No travel required in own vehicle
  - Van certification required
  - Communicates with business managers, individuals, family members, team members, Care Managers, funding sources, etc.
  - Bills according to attendance

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**Supported Employment**

- Schedule varies / can include nights and weekends / holidays / schedule can change weekly
- Caseloads fluctuate depending on intensives
- OPWDD training requirements / 24 hour Innovations training during first year of employment and 8 hours of continuing education annually & ACCES-VR CASE
- Must use vehicle to travel to job sites and transport person on occasion
- Van certification required for coaches working/covering group settings
- Communicates with business managers, individuals, family members, team members, Care Managers, funding sources, etc.
- Must be accountable for billable hours and adapt schedule to maximize

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**School to Work/Enrich**

- Fixed schedule M-F / holidays off
- Caseloads change
- No OPWDD training requirement
- No travel required in own vehicle
- Van certification required
- Communicates with business managers, individuals, family members, team members, Care Managers, funding sources, etc.
- Bills according to attendance

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**Work Center**

- **Supported Employment**
  - Several funding sources and procedures to learn. Each has separate regulations and paperwork
  - 1. ACCES-VR (intensive, extended and youth services)
  - 2. OPWDD (ETP, Discovery, extended and Pathways)
  - Writes hab plan and ISP updates
  - Writes a narrative for service documentation

- **School to Work/Enrich**
  - Two procedures to learn / STW and ETP traineeship
  - Writes the hab plan
  - Writes a narrative for service documentation

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**School to Work/Enrich**

- Fixed schedule M-F / holidays off
- Caseloads change
- No OPWDD training requirement
- No travel required in own vehicle
- Van certification required
- Communicates with business managers, individuals, family members, team members, Care Managers, funding sources, etc.
- Bills according to attendance

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**Work Center**

- **Supported Employment**
  - Two procedures to learn / pre-voc and day training
  - Manager writes the plan
  - Uses a scoring technique for documentation

- **School to Work/Enrich**
  - Two procedures to learn / STW and ETP traineeship
  - Writes the hab plan
  - Writes a narrative for service documentation
ILLUSTRATE HOW IT WILL BE ACCOMPLISHED & HIGHLIGHT THE BENEFITS

A study of how a 1, 2 and 2.50 increase for the SEMP job coaches would impact the budget was conducted. The projected cost increase for the three scenarios is as follows:

- 1.50 increase (Projected cost Increase 81k)
- 2.00 increase (Projected cost Increase 108k)
- 2.50 increase (Projected cost Increase 135k)
BENEFITS FROM THE INCREASE

Job Coach Retention
Attracting More Qualified Candidates
Increase in Morale & Feeling Appreciated
Providing More Quality Services/Implementing More of the Allowable Services
Reinvesting in the Department
Potential to Increase Revenue
A question arose regarding the productivity of the coaches and why some had more revenue generated than others.

What is the productivity expectation?
How would this be measured/tracked?
What happens when the expectation is not met?

**PRODUCTIVITY EXPECTATIONS & TRACKING**

Job Coaches are expected to achieve 75% productivity/billing daily
- Inclusive of ACCES-VR, OPWDD & Pathways to Employment
- Most of their activities should be billable

Tracked through merging of data through Kronos and Therap
- Reviewed with Job Developer and Coach
- Develop strategies to assist coaches with improving their productivity when needed
FINALLY AFTER ALMOST A YEAR THE COACHES RECEIVED A $2.00 INCREASE
ADVOCATE FOR YOUR STAFF

They say that love is more important than money, but have you ever tried to pay your bills with a hug?

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