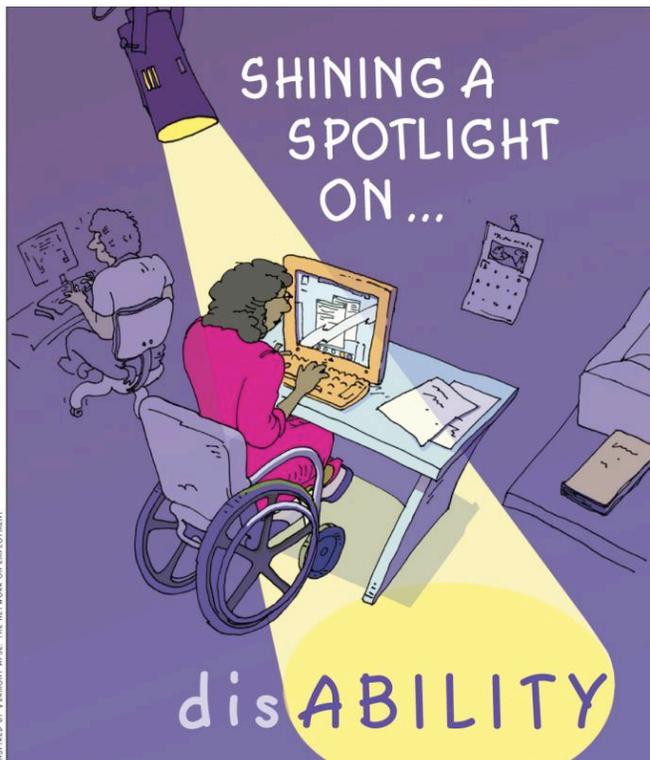


Vermont's Experience: Converting Sheltered Workshops to Employment Support

Vermont's pioneering efforts to close its last sheltered workshop for individuals with developmental disabilities by 2002 involved effective interagency, university, provider, and stakeholder collaboration. Also key to this movement were state regulations that gradually restricted and then prohibited the use of state funds for sheltered workshops and enclaves.



Central to the vision for closing sheltered workshops – which had been operating in the state for 35 years – and converting them into individualized supports is the belief that anyone can work if they are given the right supports.

The elimination of congregate and group employment happened over time as part of the agency's priority-setting process. An important part of Vermont's strategy was working with providers to convert all remaining workshops before actually setting a policy directive that funding could no longer be used for congregate settings. By doing this, the state avoided

"pulling the rug out" from under providers by eliminating congregate funding all at once.

Once all existing sheltered workshops had been successfully closed in 2005, the System of Care plan stated that DDAS funds could not be used to fund sheltered workshops at all.

Since 2007, the Green Mountain Self-Advocates (GMSA) has been part of a two-day training called **Vermont's Conversion Institute: Closing Sheltered Workshops**. *(The next one is scheduled for October 2013.)* Vermont state workers, service providers, self-advocates, families,



and employers address issues faced and strategies implemented in this conversion process. They examine the issues of policy change, training, and culture-shift needed to foster the closure of sheltered workshops while building community-based employment services.

Check out this link to see a powerpoint presentation by the Green Mountain Self-Advocates on Sheltered Workshops:

http://www.gmsavt.org/images/pdf/training/Converting_Sheltded_Workshops.pdf

Check out this *One Page Fact Sheet: Closing Shelteered Workshops in Vermont:*

<http://choices.muskie.usm.maine.edu/conversion/ClosingSheltered.pdf>