

State Director Community of Practice—Notes

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Subject Matter Experts (SMEs): Derek Shields and Leslie Dawson

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The session kicked off with a brief overview and introductions by CoP participants. Most participants have been involved with RETAIN from the beginning or since Phase 1.

Afterward, the community of practice (CoP) group went over the agenda and participated in a Jamboard session that identified what they do not want this CoP to be.

CoP participants responded to the Jamboard activity on what the CoP should not be

- No sharing or dialogue between states
- Meetings without interactions between states
- Online portal with no interaction
- Slides with lots of information instead of discussion
- Large meetings with no additional follow-up
- Not just another training session
- Lots of filler talk and introductory information that takes a lot of time but does not contribute to learning, creating, sharing, or supporting
- Meetings without a clear purpose or clear agenda
- Meeting resources are not shared afterward
- A gripe session
- Discussions that go off topic
- Not just lectures talking about things we already know

The SMEs outlined the purpose of the CoP as follows:

- Connecting and building relationships with other state directors
- Sharing best practices, challenges, and thought partnerships
- Identifying new strategies to overcome challenges or enhance existing efforts
- Receiving support and information relevant to your work from SMEs and each other

The SMEs developed a word cloud based on state director feedback from Phase 1 to get a sense of potential focus areas such as provider and stakeholder engagement, program implementation, and participants. The SMEs asked participants to take a deep dive into these topics by considering three questions: (1) What are your areas of concern and/or challenges? (2) What best practices do you want to explore? (3) What are we missing?

The participants discussed the following topics during the deep dive:

Concerns or challenges

- One participant stated they would like to hear more about employer engagement, which was not a big focus in Phase 1, but has become a bigger focus in Phase 2 as their RETAIN program has gone statewide.
- Another participant mentioned exploring different mechanisms that have been successful regarding employer engagement; they would be interested in hearing from other states.
- A participant said they would like to hear from other states about successful selling points regarding employers to include employer success stories.
- One participant mentioned inviting an employer to a CoP to get their take on what has been successful.
- One of the SMEs asked if there was a need to discuss engagement in terms of the patient, provider, or other workforce partners?
 - One participant said engagement may be useful with medical providers that are with the grant partners versus providers outside of the grant partnership.
 - Another mentioned engaging with other community partners.
- A participant said sustainability planning should be part of the discussion and that it would be unfortunate to set up the program up without the sustainability piece.
 - The SME clarified whether this participant would like to see where other states are with sustainability, what their plans include, and how they will be put into practice.
 - The participant said yes, but also would like to see opportunities to work together across states.
 - One participant's state has worked with a university to create an RTW certificate program as one way to build capacity through preprofessional training.
- One participant mentioned the study's design and concerns with preventing contamination and keeping the treatment group distinct from the control group. They also wanted to know how each state's program supports the research.
- This same participant also mentioned learning more about RTW/SAW interventions like accommodations, transitional employment, and what employers are doing to bring people back.

- Another participant suggested thinking more about operating under a collaborative agreement and what it means to collaborate with different organizations on the federal, state, and regional levels. They wanted feedback from ODEP about what collaboration looks like.

Best practices participants would like to see

- A participant mentioned satisfaction surveys and wanted to know what other states are doing, who they are surveying, and what questions they are asking.
 - The SME asked this participant if they liked the idea of connecting continuous quality improvement back to the satisfaction surveys.
 - The participant liked the SME's idea.
- The SME wondered if participants were interested in best practices around DEI and asked what they are doing to help their grant staff be better prepared to work with diverse participants.
 - A participant mentioned aspects of service delivery to patients. They work with different interpreters and said it goes way beyond outreach and engagement to how services are delivered. They also mentioned multicultural training.

What's missing?

- One participant mentioned comparative statistics: number of enrollments, staff, providers across states. This would enable states to compare figures (benchmark) to see if they are on the right track.
- Another participant mentioned hearing about the basic design of each state's program.
- The SME suggested that program design and sustainability could be looked at together.
- Another participant said they supported the idea.
- The SME asked about diversity, equity, and inclusion as a topic of interest.
- A participant responded regarding service delivery, multicultural training and data in terms of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- The SME asked if there was any interest in keeping employees engaged once they are in the program?
- A participant said in the occupational health world, the client is the employer, and it can be easy to lose track of the patient, so this topic is always top of mind.

The participants discussed the structure of future CoPs

- The SME asked what structure participants would like to use for the CoPs going forward. Would they like these to be state-led or directed by an SME facilitator?
 - A participant said the format could be flexible, involving either a state or SME facilitator.
 - Participants were receptive to the idea of picking one or two topics of interest and then facilitating between the states on those topics.

Next steps

- The SMEs are offering one-on-one office hours with the states to give them the opportunity to ask questions outside of the CoP. This was well received. A participant recommended having a sign-up sheet for scheduling.
- Next CoP is scheduled for June 8.
- Wednesday afternoons do not work for at least one participant.