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**THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT MOVEMENT
VIDEO COMPILATION OF INTERVIEW EXCERPTS
OCTOBER 14, 2016
RECORD ID: 043-DO**

**EXCERPTS FROM ORAL HISTORY VIDEO INTERVIEWS WITH
CONNIE FERRELL (027-MI); PATRICK SANDY (039-MI); SUELLEN JACKSON-BONER (044-MI)**

CF: CONNIE FERRELL

SJB: SUELLEN JACKSON-BONER

PS: PATRICK SANDY

[TITLE CREDITS WITH MUSIC]

[00:00:09]

CF: My first introduction to supported employment was in 1981 which was about three and a half, four years before supported employment was actually written into the federal law. So we were kind of inventing it, if you will, at that particular point in time.

I know there were places across the country prior to that that had dabbled with job coaching, but the concept of providing an individual individual supports on the job site, not requiring people to be “job ready” before going to work, and then the real unique feature being ongoing support.

SJB: In the early 80s—1984—was the supported employment initiative. At that time, supported employment was just beginning across this country. There were pieces of it going on in Oregon and Washington state, some of the states that were much more progressive—I think maybe Virginia was another state—where there were leadership that was going on there that created the supported employment notion.

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PS: I think that the movement was driven by a couple of different things. It was driven, in part, by families saying, I think I would like my child to have the opportunity to consider working in the community. It was also driven by research that was being done at universities that showed that the folks with disabilities could learn to do a variety of things.

CF: For a period of time different states were applying for some federal money to take five years to change the system in that state away from segregated, congregated employment to integrated supported employment.

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SJB: Well the developmental disabilities, uhm—federal—at the federal level thought employment was, and is, a very important issue for people with disabilities, particularly for people with developmental disabilities, where jobs just were not plentiful, or were not even considered for people with severe disabilities. So they took on the initiative of supported employment.

One of the most exciting things that happened in that whole initiative—there were several state agencies that played a significant role in employment for people with disabilities getting employed. That was the Department of Education, Vocational Rehabilitation—Family and Social Services had funding—there were different funding mechanisms, and what would happen through the budgetary process is that each state agency would develop their own budget and would, of course, go before the budgetary committees—state budgetary committees to present those budgets. Often times what you would see with state agencies—and I'm not certain how true that is today, it may still very well be true—you would see a lot of competition and competing for the same dollars. There was not this "let's get together."

In this particular situation, we had four state agencies come together and support each other's budget for supported employment. So nobody was arguing among themselves. It was everybody came together, and so when they went before the budget agency there was none of this "I need this money," "you don't get this," "I need these dollars." It was let's all support each other, which was the first in history to happen. And they supported each other's budget and came out of there with, I think—what do I want to say—eleven point some odd million dollars together, and this was a mechanism to fund then supported employment initiatives.

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The Council [Governor's Council for People with Disabilities], by virtue of its federal dollars—we had a lot more flexibility in terms of how we used those dollars as part of that support system, so we funded the mechanism to get this rolling and off the ground. We could do some supports with our dollars that would be different than what education—education could do supporting of educating students with disabilities with regard to employment, and so forth. Voc rehab could do some follow along services and placement services. So there was some gaps, so the Council filled in for those gaps where there were gaps.

So through that initiative we were able to fund a number of programs and projects under supported employment, and we've held conferences. We did kind of a strategic way of presenting this. We would—supported employment was not very well known in terms of "what is supported employment?" So we held a state-wide conference, brought in all the heavy hitters from across the country and had them present about supported employment to get a lot of enthusiasm and rallying point about "let's do supported employment. It seems like the right thing to do, seems like it would work."

And then from the state-wide conference, we held regional conferences because not everybody, of course, could go—come to the state-wide conference. So we held regional conferences throughout the state, again presenting information about supported employment. And once we got that presented and people kind of excited about the whole notion about supported employment, that's when we started initiating these projects and programs.

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SJB: And then that's when we, you know, we developed papers in terms of position papers, fact finding papers and so forth that was presented to not only policymakers but also to the general public. And that, again, garnered some more support and then through those efforts is when we were able then to go further then and initiate this whole notion of the support for funding for supported employment. So that was one of the first initiatives that we—that the Council did in terms of some real systems change.

[00:06:12]

PS: In Indiana, actually, I feel like—and I was there—I feel like parents were very apprehensive about it and we had to really sort of spend a lot of time nurturing parents and getting them to understand this opportunity is a good one and there's a safety net and it will be okay and let's just try it and see what happens and eventually got some brave people that, you know, said yeah I want something different for my child so we'll do this. So that was an interesting process, and they brought up some really interesting points that I think really affected the movement, because of some of the problems this particular industry has. I remember some of the concerns that parents had initially was, well I believe *you* and I trust *you*, but *you* may not be here the next time I come here, because I've seen a dozen faces like yours during the time I've been involved with this organization, and my child's been involved, and if you're not here, is anybody else going to understand what happened here, and that I do have the safety net?

And those kinds of conversations were hard for us to hear, because we were full of energy and excitement about this new possibility, but they're right. This is their child's life. There is a lot of turnover in this industry, and it was radically different than what we had preached to them for a longtime, which is your child is always going to need the safety of this environment and now all of a sudden we're saying let's go out, let's see what's available in the community, and it's going to be great things for your young person that you love. And so it was a, kind of a, incongruence—storm between us as people that we're just excited about opportunities for folks with disabilities. The system that was a little bit apprehensive about whether this was a good idea or not because it was going to change everything that we thought was appropriate up to that point, and the families who were saying, yeah I want to believe you, but I'm not sure because you may not be here, and I don't know that I want my child to be a guinea pig.

[END CREDITS WITH MUSIC]

[END OF COMPILATION]