

good afternoon everyone and welcome to the first national webinar of the new aod disability employment ta center my name is serena lowe and i am a senior advisor to the new center and just to give you a little bit of background about the center our purpose is to provide evidence-based training and technical assistance to aod funded grantees across various programs so that means the federally funded sales the dd network and our tbi state partnership programs our intent with this ta and training is to build the capacity of the aod grantee network to effectuate increased employment and economic outcomes of individuals with disabilities at both an individual and systems level the focus of our ga will be on scalability and sustainability of evidence-based practices and our desired outcomes is to really be able to demonstrate improvements in employment and economic outcomes for individuals with an array of disabilities directly in connection with efforts by the aod grantees in terms of our today's presentation our tagline for the aodta center is focused on three key areas collaboration innovation and systems change so with that we thought it would be a great idea to start our seminal program with the power of partnerships and really give everybody a flavor of the breadth and depth of some absolute fantastic models that are across the aod network right now related to aod grantees who have reached out to various partners in both state government among each other and also with employers and external stakeholders in the self-advocacy and family advocacy space you really dig down drill down and show what can happen with really strong partnerships and collaborations focused on employment and economic advancement so with that i'd love to introduce uh today's moderator uh and also the project manager for the new ta center amy gonzalez and just to give you a little sense if you don't know amy amy comes with a lot of excellent experience um both working in direct services for the first half of her career working in the american workforce system in the vr system and then later on for you said and as state day and employment services director for the dd agency in the state of tennessee she then went on to become a senior policy advisor for the u.s department of um sorry use department of labor's office of disability employment policy and we are so proud of to have her on this team in such a strong leadership role you all will get a chance you know all of us um later on and throughout the year um so on that note i'm going to turn it over to amy who will get us started amy thank you serena it has been a pleasure to get to work with the team and it's just an honor to be here with everyone here today on our first webinar uh welcome again and my name is amy gonzalez as serena stated i'm the project manager i have dark long brown hair i am wearing a white and brown uh button-down shirt with a black blazer and i have crystal earrings on and just for some humor i'm going to identify myself as a young woman

moving right along into today's presentation as serena stated today we are going to hear from four state teams about partnerships about the manner in which they develop their partnerships and how they work strategically with the stakeholders within their collaborative efforts of how they worked through key issues to address barriers to employment and how they worked to achieve key outcomes related to their systems change effort focused on advancing individuals with disabilities in employment and economic advancement so a quick overview of today's agenda after the welcoming remarks we're going to dive into our state team explanations so we'll hear from the south carolina team about the partnership with the center for independent living and department of education to focus on transitioning youth under pre-employment transition services we're going to hear from tennessee they're going to talk to us about their employment first partnership their tennessee works partnership and how they leverage some of those partnerships to enhance outcomes and to continue fostering that collaboration we're going to hear from louisiana how disability rights was a key entity in supporting

some of the major state entities in developing an mou and we're going to hear from a team from indiana focused on advancing individuals with traumatic brain injuries through some employment competencies as it pertains to the vocational rehabilitation system after we hear from our state teams we're going to dive into a rich discussion we're very eager to hear your questions your comments and we hope to have an interactive discussion after the teams present next slide please now i'm going to introduce our south carolina team sandy jordan is a director of employment programs at able south carolina a center for independent living she has been in the disability employment field for 15 years and her current efforts around the statewide initiative hire me sc cheryl harbert george currently serves as the director of the ex office of exceptional children for the florence school district 3 in lake city south carolina she has been in this role since 2015. miss george has been a special education teacher a transition specialist a special ed instructional specialist prior to becoming a district level administrator she is currently completing a phd in special education at the university of south carolina south carolina team take it away thank you amy cheryl and i are so excited to be here my name is sandy jordan and i am director of employment programs with able south carolina and i am wearing a black and gold shirt um i have glasses i am a white woman and cringe i will go ahead and say a middle age because i am approaching the age where you start saying your middle age so i am cringing on the inside but i am saying that i'm middle age and i think you can hear from my accent that i am from the south so i'm from south carolina next slide please so we're going to start off with tony a little bit about how our partnership with florence 3 began able south carolina is a center for independent living in south carolina and what we did initially is we reached out to our state department of education in 2018 because we really needed an additional pilot site for our partnership and employment grant and our partnerships in employment grant that is a pie grant and you may have heard of those grants in the past they're been awarded to a variety of different states but we are very honored to be the only center for independent living that has received a pie grant and this is a systems change grant and it is typically offered to state agencies to use eds to really large organizations and so we were awarded that grant back in 2016 and again just very very honored to have received that grant and that really the majority of our systems change efforts in south carolina are coming from the disability community so as a center for independent living over 80 percent of our staff are people with disabilities and so we wanted to highlight that and say that that's really important but that grant really allowed us to start this conversation with florence iii school district and build that relationship and so what we did is we started with our department of education our state doe and we've got some really good partnerships there and so i'll say here that you know it's really important to have relationships at different levels um so we've got relationships with our state department of education and so we called them and said hey what is the school district that's doing some really innovative things around for students with disabilities and especially students with intellectual and developmental disabilities and what is a school district that really believes that all students are employable and can work and you know would be willing to just kind of jump on board with us right and be innovative and be really passionate about what what we're doing and so they connected me with cheryl at florence three and i'm so glad that they did because cheryl and the florence 3 team is just exactly who we needed and they're willing to jump on board with whatever is needed for the students and so with that partnership and employment grant we have been really focused on data collection so really making sure that students with disabilities especially students with intellectual and developmental disabilities are being connected to vocational rehabilitation to our dd agency and also uh we've got that family buy-in so we have our parent information and training center at um those monthly meetings as well so that is how the partnership began donald next slide please

so one thing that we wanted to note before we kind of before i move on with with how it's going now and how we've been able to increase that partnership is that florence county is a unserved area for sales in our state so in south carolina we have three centers for independent living and we do have some counties that are not served by a center for independent living that are unserved we've got a few of those counties and one of those counties is florence county um which cheryl is with florence three school district and so um we also along with the partnership employment grant we also were recently able to connect with vocational rehabilitation in our state and build a contract to serve students with disabilities through pre-employment transition services and so we were able to start that contract a couple of years ago and so as we started to build this relationship with cheryl through the pie grant we said hey what about pre-employment transition services and so we started small in 2019 through 2020 last school year we served 18 students with priyats in florence 30. i will note that florence iii is a very rural school district um and it is a school district where the majority of students are a minority um and so 18 students with disabilities that that's a good number of students but it is starting small and so our focus was really on students with intellectual and developmental disabilities so with this i'll say that it's okay to start small don't be afraid to start small right we want to make sure that we do it right and that we're building those positive relationships and so whether we need to start small or the school district needs to start small be okay with that this school year in 2020 and 2021 we've been able to expand to other students with disabilities and so we're really we're really excited about that we're excited about serving more students in florence three and really expanding our partnerships we also have been able to collaborate with florence iii on career and technical education so through our relationship with cheryl we discovered that she was just doing some very innovative things making sure that students with disabilities were getting connected with career and technical education and that is something that is very important and if you don't know we do have some recent legislation perkins five um that authorizes career and technical education and perkins five places a special emphasis on students with disabilities and so um one thing that we've been able to do with cheryl is we've been able to kind of go around to different conferences throughout our state and connect her with other school districts to help other school districts learn what connecting students with those cte courses look like and really help some other school districts learn some best practices from florence three and we've been able to highlight some of the work um that they've been able to do so lastly i'll say i appreciate florence three i appreciate our partnership with cheryl and we're just so we're so lucky to have her involved in our work at this time i will pass it on to cheryl good afternoon everyone i'm going to describe myself as a young middle aged african-american woman today i have kind of blondish highlights and a dark charcoal gray shirt on i smile a lot so hopefully you can feel me smiling through the future the virtual uh platform um we are very fortunate to have this partnership um if you can go on to the next slide please uh it has brought to our district a tremendous amount of redirection and needed focus it has shifted our priorities i will tell you that in order for it to work for us the first thing i had to do after being approached was to make sure that i got buy-in for my superintendent and also my board of directors because i want what we do in our district to be um beneficial there was a saying that recently i i learned it says it has to be the squeeze has to be worth the juice that you get out of it and this was definitely one of the things that was worth every single squeeze to get the juice out of family engagement connecting students to our needed resources our district is very under underserved and one of the things that this pilot program has done for us is absolutely get our parents to talk amongst themselves about the great things that are happening with just if the 18 students that we started with so the majority of our parents are familiar

with our partnership they know that um the outside agencies are immersed in our district and they appreciate that um we definitely for myself i was new um as a director when the pilot project came about and one thing for me it was important that i dedicated a time i call it sacred time to meet with the partners every month it's easy to say that you're busy as a director but i have to be unbusy for this pilot project because it's that important to our to the students the families in our district to move forward um so again collaboration and partnership means commitment um i call them my accountability coaches so when we are at the um at our monthly meeting if i say that i'm going to have some data about cte courses and the numbers of students with disabilities and i'm not just talking students with high incidence disabilities our specific target is our students in non-diploma traps so we are advocating for those students we're counting those uh cte courses we're making their participation meaningful to improve their outcomes so i have to make sure that i have time dedicated in my schedule to be there and be present in everything that i do for this pilot project i model that for my teachers so they understand that it's important to come prepared and ready to share out and this is a commitment that we have from the top all the way down um to our teachers our parents and our students um for us it's for me in particular um i came in from a behind the director who was there for like 20 something years so i came in new fresh and i had lots of crazy ideas that i wanted to share with the district and luckily again i had um the support of the superintendent and the board of directors as well as my teachers who were looking to do something different because it really um it was important for them to make those outcomes for students better so we have done things like turkey distribution for family engagement we've created a um career discovery lab for our students who are from our most profound in terms of disability needs to our high incident students all of them have career and technology experiences whether it be adaptive and modified to traditional we make that those options available to all of our students and i think it it requires a certain level of bravery you can't be afraid of the no you plan for the no until you get to yes so there are so many different things that i brought to the district where i was preparing for the no and knowing my superintendent she always wants to know tell me about what could happen and how are you going to fill that gap and um i think collaboration and partnership is definitely about going in there having all your different options available thinking about the no and figuring out the pathway to yes and everything we do for our students is getting to that pathway to yes if it's low parent engagement how do we bring our parents in to connect with those services if it's coveted how do we overcome the isolation of covet to make sure that we're still engaging families this year one of the things we did we normally have a um turkey distribution where we bring everybody in and we have a meal this time we did it by drive-by and as we were driving by and delivering turkeys we're also getting parents to fill out the um outside agent agency release forms and intake forms so we can get our families connected one of the things that we're piloting this year also is that i'm the intake coordinator for the district so as ddsn is um getting our students engaged i'm the person that's filling out the paperwork with their families because they know me um they know it's easier for them to come to my office so we're targeting that as one of the outcomes we hope to improve and that's you know that's florence three thank you cheryl um and cheryl and i do have our contact information on this last slide and so if you've got any questions anything that you would like to follow up with us about we would love to connect with you and and i wanted to mention um one last thing before we leave you cheryl kind of talked a little bit about the what's in it for me right um making sure that we've got mutually beneficial partnerships and cheryl touched on that you know we need to make sure that it's mutually beneficial between the different agencies so you know when i first approached cheryl i needed to make sure that it was not only mutually beneficial it was beneficial for my agency but also beneficial for cheryl as well so

i really needed to lead with that which is something that i love to do with our partners but cheryl also touched on the fact that um with her partnership with the parents she needed to make sure that it's mutually beneficial for them so we needed some release form signed to make sure students were getting connected to these adult agencies and so you know they came together and said you know let's get some turkeys donated um and we'll make sure that that parents come and they had an overwhelming response to that and um you gave the parents a turkey they were willing to to sign the forms and make sure the students students got connected and so just making sure that you have those mutually beneficial relationships at all levels

thank you thank you sandy and cheryl well what an amazing partnership in cal in south carolina to advance youth with disabilities under priets i am sure that you ladies will get quite a few questions and we're really looking forward to sorting those through next i am going to move on next slide please with speaker introductions for the state of tennessee wanda willis has been the executive director of the tennessee council since 1991 spearheading systems changed initiatives in housing employment health and other vital areas including launching the tennessee partners and policy making leadership institute for family members and people with disabilities under wanda's leadership the council also created an innovative leadership academy to train employees across state government in best practices and disability with the department of human resources lauren piercy is a director of public policy for the council on developmental disabilities in tennessee before joining she worked at tennessee's medicaid agency tennicare helping design the employment and community first choices program for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities prior to moving to tennessee in 2013 lawrence spent six years working at the national governors association elise macmillan jd is co-director of the vanderbilt kennedy center for excellence in developmental disabilities senior associate at the department of psychiatry and behavioral sciences and the vkc director of public policy and community engagement she holds various leadership positions including past president of the arc united states and she and her husband are parents to three young adults including a son with down syndrome who i have enjoyed watching grow and achieve his employment outcomes it is my pleasure to turn it over to the tennessee team take it away uh just momentarily if i may intervene for asl interpreters asl interpreter number one would you like to take a break so that asl interpreter number two can take over

and then just turn off your video until it's your turn to resume

ready to go i think tennessee's ready yes i'm sorry i'm wanda willis with council on developmental disabilities so good to see many names today that i recognize uh i am i have a shoulder length light brown hair wear glasses have on a white top with a black jacket and the closest you're going to get to my age is knowing that i've done this work for about 50 years so um with that i'm gonna open up our discussion to tell you a little bit about tennessee partnerships um the council on developmental disabilities in tennessee works closely with our db act partners and those are the our protection and advocacy system and our university centers employment has been one of our first priorities top priorities that is for many years each of our agencies brings their own strengths and contributions to the table and we're really good in tennessee at working as a team building partnerships because ultimately

we know that we all have the same vision as to where we're headed in our state and in this case that would be increasing employment opportunities for people with disabilities on the first slide you're seeing three working groups that form the basis for our work in employment all of these groups are based on strong partnerships and a shared commitment for increasing employment in our state so just briefly i will be telling you more about each of these but to run down them quickly you'll hear more about the employment roundtable the state agencies the council leads you'll hear about the governor's employment task force for employment first task force that came about as a result of our government governor signing an employment first executive order in 2013 and then finally tennessee works is a very large overarching partnership that connects all of our public and private groups together and is led by the vanderbilt kennedy center so before we launch into telling more about next these and elise mcmillan is going to tell you a little bit about tools and processes that pull all of these groups together that i just mentioned next slide please great thanks so much wanda and it's really nice to be here with everybody today i'm elise mcmillan as amy said earlier i co-direct our vanderbilt kennedy center you said i have gray hair i wear glasses and i have on a red shirt and i'll say i'm very proud to be old enough to be a grandmother and i'll leave my age at that so one of the things you may be wondering from wanda's presentation is how in the world all the groups she listed worked together and after vanderbilt in tennessee had received one of the pie grants sandy mentioned that earlier in her presentation that's partnerships and employment and that was a systems change grant offered by the administration on community living we received that grant in 2012 and as we were sitting at one of the group meetings one day then one of the representatives from our state department of education said how are all our work groups going to work together and how are we going to know when we have achieved our objectives objectives and out of that we did launch this strategic planning process that encompassed the work of the tennessee works partnership the governor's task force and also the employment roundtable and we have used that strategic plan we review it at our meetings we update it and we actually later this year we'll be doing another strategic plan because we're very happy to say that many of the objectives and goals we had outlined we have achieved at this point in terms of the tennessee works partnership we are a resource for gathering data and for developing research and evaluation in the state of tennessee through our strategic planning we have set up work groups and subgroups that span all of these different groups in different areas so for example we have an educator's work group we have an employer's work group and then depending on the other issues or areas where we want to develop things we have a mental health subgroup we have a subgroup who has just recently developed training with our american jobs across the state and then we also have the work with the employment roundtable next slide please so we mentioned the tennessee works and we do have a website tennesseeworks.org and it on this this provides a hub really for all kinds of employment resources within our state two of the highlighted features of this website are a rise to work blog that's written by janet shouse one of our colleagues at the vanderbilt kennedy center you said i did notice that she is attending as a participant today and this blog while we first developed it for individuals with disabilities and families it has proven to be very popular across all the different audiences of our partnership we also have a podcast the landscape podcast which is done by nave eldar who works for the blue care managed care organization in our state and he also provides some wonderful information on these podcasts also as we originally developed the tennessee works partnership we started a think employment summit which when we began was an in-person annual statewide summit it developed into regional summits unfortunately that had to be halted with the pandemic this last year so it is now a virtual summit and we

held that most recently in january and had our highest attendance ever in terms of in terms of the employment summit next slide please

one of the things that we planned as we originally developed our strategic plan was to take training that would go across audiences so we wouldn't be doing training in silos and we're very proud that one of the outgrowths of our partnerships is transition tennessee transition tennessee is a website and resources that are developed under the leadership of my colleague eric carter and this is supported by for educators this is supported by a long-term training contract with our state department of education and also for preet's training it's developed a long-term contract with our vocational rehabilitation program both are these websites have incredible resources webinars and other information and so while they are developed for doe and for vr vr they are open to any audiences who want to use them and we know by the data that they do have many many subscribers and that the information on these websites is used by multiple audiences across the state next slide please and i'll turn things over now to my colleague lauren piercy hi everyone i will wrap us up my name is lauren piercy i work for wanda i'm on staff with the tennessee council on developmental disabilities i wear glasses when i'm looking at a computer so i'm wearing them now i have brown hair that's a little bit past my shoulders and a cream-colored cardigan on today and to show my age i was in my first job in my 20s when i met serena in dc and wanda and elise as the tennessee team when i was working in dc and amy and now i'm in my 30s and still consider all of them mentors and so i'm really excited to be here talking about some of the work that i've been able to do since i moved to dc excuse me from dc to tennessee and one of those just happened to coincide with the year i moved in 2013 our governor signed an executive order declaring us in employment first state as wanda and elise alluded to our partnerships had been in place already for a very long time so we were ready to just kind of use the momentum to propel us the work we were already doing forward and annually the task force that the executive order created reports data and progress and goals in an in a report that we've titled expect employment so in addition to the strategic plan that elise mentioned we have a report annually that keeps us accountable to organizing all the work we're doing celebrating the work we're doing and tracking our progress in a really official way i have screenshots for those of you who can see the slide showing that our governor makes the opening note uh that's part of the report and that we spend time to make it more than just a document a word document it's it has a graphic design our governor's picture is on it um and we also have accompanying videos and a website on employment first so there are three screenshots that show that visually and we chose to do that today in our short amount of time just to show that we think this makes a big difference in engaging the highest levels of our policy makers but also in explaining what we do to the general public next slide so the employment roundtable in wanda please take yourself put your video on when you want to chime in here but the employment roundtable is one of the partnerships that's a little bit narrower than the other two because it's only for state agencies so years ago elise and wanda started the group among i think four four people and it goes to the previous speakers saying don't be afraid to start small and it has grown to over 10 state agencies including not the usual suspects so treasury and our able program joins our department of general services has a disability program and they join anyone who touches employment in our state government is welcome and we really keep it to state agencies so that we can focus specifically on a really safe environment to talk about barriers and coordinating services and address those barriers next slide so i'm just going to tick through quickly um i think i'm we're at the end of our time here but you will have a copy of these slides so if anyone has questions

about these are we wanted to give some concrete examples of the impact that these partnerships have had over the the recent past so i won't read these since we're just about out of time but i i do want to just um hover here uh it we have an mou about transition services we have a part of our 1115 waiver just for employment first transition tennessee is what elise talked about we have a vr training and an american job center training and we have a new our last one here is a community-based transition grant that would create local versions of that roundtable group i talked about so that children's services and medicaid and all the rest are talking to each other at a local level and not just the state level next slide

so elise i'm going to turn this back to you for lessons learned and just to close us out i think we're right at our time here thanks lauren and wanted to jump in if you need to but i i do think uh as this slide says our partnerships bookend all of our works together and beyond the regular meetings and the mous and all that we've developed relationships we've started to work together and also we can sustain those ideas so we know that even say if this grant funding is running out or this contract is running out our partnerships continue and we'll find some way to make them work within the broader employ employment first movement wanda anything to add at the very end now i think we y'all done a great job uh we're glad to provide more information about these teams that work together in tennessee and if we go to the last slide then we do have our contact information and if you can't tell we're all very happy to talk on and on and on about the amazing work going on in our state thank you thank you team tennessee you did a wonderful job at articulating the various groups and how they function with each of the respective roles and responsibilities for stakeholder engagement next slide please

all right next up is the introduction for our speaker from louisiana chris rodriguez has a long history of advan advocating on behalf of individuals with disabilities on the local state and national levels he currently serves as the executive director of disability rights louisiana prior to his position at drla mr rodriguez held a number of positions in the disability advocacy community including director of public policy for the national disability institute director of governmental affairs and media relations for the michigan protection and advocacy agency and director of chapter services at the arc of texas mr rodriguez's passion for the disability community comes from his experiences as the younger sibling to a person with significant intellectual and developmental disabilities it is my pleasure to turn it over to chris rodriguez take it away thank you so much amy i appreciate that as amy said i'm chris rodriguez i'm the director executive director of disability rights louisiana i identify as an hispanic male i'm in my mid 30s today i'm wearing a uh kind of dark navy blue uh fleece so let's go ahead and get started slide please so just very quickly i know everybody's probably fairly familiar with the pna system or the protection and advocacy system but i always like to go over our individual mission before i start talking about the specific things that we do as an organization so disability rights louisiana protects and advocates for the human and legal services excuse me human and legal rights of all children adults and seniors with disabilities our work aims to empower the disability community to live an integrated life free from abuse neglect and exploitation and we have a number of different ways that we do that but i'll tell you there's no way we can have nearly as much impact as we do without having a profound appreciation for the power of collaboration which is why i'm so happy to be here today to tell you a little bit about how we exercise those collaborations and also hear from the other great presenters my mind's kind of you know lots of light bulbs going off with all kinds of ideas hearing about all the great things going on slide so as

you probably know the pnas as with other organizations in the disability field have an array of different priorities as you can see on the screen there those are some of our priorities not the least of which is our efforts to increase competitive integrated employment among all individuals with disabilities that's kind of how i find myself working and talking today slide so we're going to focus today on the employment first state leadership mentoring program collaboration that disability rights louisiana is a partner on but i did want to just highlight very briefly some of our other impactful collaborative efforts that we use to have a seat at the table to try and increase competitive integrated employment here in the state of louisiana those include our position on the governor's advisory council on disability affairs in fact we chair the legislative committee which puts us in a prime position to talk about the importance of employment and all the wonderful policies that can address uh what is unfortunately a lack of employment at least here in louisiana with respect to people with disabilities we also sit on our louisiana developmental disabilities council which is a great way to explore different ideas related to the dd population with respect to to um to employment and then we have a seat at the louisiana rehabilitation council and that's our workforce commission it's basically our louisiana department of labor and that's a unique position because we really get an opportunity to um interact with chambers of commerce and different entities that aren't specifically disability related per se but we have the opportunity to educate them on all the um different types of contributions that people with disabilities can make to commerce and to the employment sector all right slide so let's talk a little bit more about uh this particular project that we highlighted at the beginning here the program first examined on a very deep level the the extent in which successful employment outcomes were being obtained and sustained by individuals with serious mental illness and other mental health challenges so this was a unique opportunity for us we had done a lot of really great work and i think we had made strides uh with respect to the uh target population of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities but we hadn't really been paying attention to some of the unique challenges that face people with serious mental illness and other mental health challenges when they are attempting to obtain and sustain employment we were noticing that the the solutions that we were finding for one population really weren't causing a lot of increases employment for other people with disabilities and since we are a group that represents all people with disabilities we wanted to explore this a little deeper and see why are we having the challenges that we are and how we might address them um so it was necessary in order to really solidify the assumption this particular target population was experiencing some issues with respect to obtaining competitive integrated employment uh we wanted to go through a very thoughtful exercise with respect to figuring out the extent in which this was an issue and figuring out what types of barriers existed and how we could address them slide so uh we put together a group of both state agency representatives and non-profit representatives across the span of disability and we did a a really thorough review of the existing systems uh and the current quality metrics related to employment of individuals with intel excuse me with uh serious mental illness and other mental health challenges uh we looked at the referral and workflow and the associated payment mechanisms of individual smi in two lrs or louisiana rehabilitative services and we reviewed the potential uh reverse incentives or other barriers to employment among this particular target uh population we looked within the existing uh systems and our aim our goal collectively uh through collaboration and communication and kind of studying the different things and all the different partners contributing in on their areas of expertise was to try and implement systems change and to have greater and newer outcomes for this particular population slide so let's talk about some of the work product that we wanted to establish as a result of this collaboration number one we wanted to see a research paper again solidifying in a much more in-depth way the state of the issue that

we we saw anecdotally but we really didn't have anybody putting uh i guess the time and effort into looking at it uh in a very kind of in the weeds type way that you need to do when you're trying to create systemic change so that was one the research paper the other was the development and executed memorandum of understanding between our louisiana office of mental health so that's the mental health side of our louisiana department of health and lrs or louisiana rehabilitative services because uh not unlike in a lot of state and federal uh bureaucracies sometimes it's a matter of just communication between two state agencies or two federal agencies that for whatever reason uh perhaps is not being done uh and perhaps if it was to be done you could see greater outcomes for the both the populations that they both serve simultaneously and then lastly we wanted to develop a strategic plan of communication between the two state agencies again kind of harping on this communication two agencies they're serving the same target population but you know we found that the communication between the two uh could be improved slide so just very quickly on the research paper now this research paper was the product of months of both individual and collaborative discussion amongst our partners of which we had a diverse group of partners and we also utilized a subject matter expert that was provided to us through the office of disability employment policy and that individual was really great an objective person in the room who also had a heightened expertise in this particular field was able to facilitate facilitator conversations and produce a really great research paper that helped us better understand the issues that were taking place in our state and even more so than that was being able to was able to provide uh some tailored solutions slide

so in addition to the research paper uh we also produced and helped develop a memorandum of understanding it was concluded that an increased collaboration and communication between the two state agencies uh it was our hope that it would yield improved employment outcomes for people with smi and other mental health challenges that were basically acting as barriers to their employment so in order to provide specific direction and to build that kind of accountability to make sure these two partners were going to start communicating better and working together more collaboratively we established the mou slide some of the key components of the mou included an agreed upon and defined purpose of the mou so you know both state agencies recognizing that there was an issue related to the target population and both recognizing that working collaboratively they could address those types of issues and those barriers uh also included obviously cross-agency trainings uh shared cross-agency information and data which was a big component um it declared principal contacts between the two agencies so they knew how to communicate and with whom uh and they also developed uh other interagency referral processes depending on the needs of the target population contacting either one of the agencies independently slide again we also developed a strategic communication plan between the two this outlined in general and in great detail how each state agency partner and others would work to communicate with the target population with each other and with the public at large slide

key components of the strategic communications plan included target population of the of the communication so depending on what they were trying to communicate who they were trying to communicate that with which partners were in fact responsible with those various types of communication and then the forms of communication that any one message might take so the

difference between uh if something is best addressed by a memo or a social media post or a press conference or public event and who was responsible for those and making sure that the communication was frequent with all uh stakeholders uh and all actors slide

so very quickly some of kind of what i in my experience is being a part of that both as an individual and as the representative of the pna some keys to success that i thought we utilize in order to have these uh to produce these work products uh and i think that uh includes making sure that you have a diverse set of partners at the table that all bring different points of view and different types of expertise as it relates to your common goal again i think we had the great privilege of working with odep and and being allowed to have a subject matter expert expert this person again i i can't tell you how beneficial having a third party objective facilitator uh in the room is to really get people working and really get people excited about the goal and to make sure everybody's participating and holding folks accountable for their participation not only you know showing up to the meetings which i know especially when you have the right people in the room these are the right people because they have such great expertise and they're often being pulled in a million directions so making sure that once people make commitments they show up to the meetings but not only that but that they feel comfortable in those meetings uh communicating talking and participating and i think again uh having a diverse group and having a third party facilitator there really helps do both of those um understanding the extent of the presumed issue before developing solutions so this is a great one right so many times you know we see anecdotal situations and we want to jump directly to you know the solutions because we want to help people that we represent but oftentimes we really need to step back a little bit and really have a deeper understanding of the issue so that when we do decide on solutions we really know that those are products of a deeper understanding of the issue that we're trying to address and again i keep going back to it but having the sme involved was vital in that particular issue related to understanding the problem and then tailoring solutions to address it slide and then lastly just a couple other things understanding that identifying a need or problem area is not about assigning blame or pointing fingers but about collectively being thoughtful about solutions so oftentimes as we're identifying uh barriers or we'll call them problems and the systems and you have the right people around the table people can get defensive uh i know you know lrs is looking at education education's looking at the office of behavioral health and they're all kind of saying hey this isn't our fault and knowing that it's nobody's fault these problems exist these issues these barriers exist it's not about pointing fingers not about assigning blame it's about having a discussion on how to create creative solutions uh also creating realistic products that have universal buy-in from partners is incredibly important and then obviously uh following up in progress i know we've all developed documents and reports only to find that perhaps they sit on shelves one of the biggest things is making sure that um you really do all that hard work justice by making sure that sure that there's follow through and holding uh uh individuals and and agencies accountable for the things that you said you were going to do okay slide i think that is it there's my contact information try to get through that as quickly as possible so that others have an opportunity to tell you more about the great work that they're doing but i'm happy to take questions at the end and again thank you so much for allowing me to participate today

thank you chris next slide please we're going to move right along into indiana speaker bios peter bisbeckos is the executive director of resource facilitation a neuropsychology for the rehabilitation hospital of indiana over the past 30 years he has served as the ada coordinator for the city of indianapolis the disability service director at indiana's family and social services administration and worked in senior services before joining the team at rhi having been a vocational rehabilitation client in college due to a lifelong vision impairment peter is dedicated to helping people with disabilities become active and engaged members of their communities lara trexler otrcbis has been an occupational therapist for the last 38 years working primarily in the field of young adults and adult acquired brain injury program development and direct service provision in clinic community home and return to work settings ms trexler currently serves as the acl grants clinical program manager in the department of resource facilitation now i'm going to turn it over to the indiana team take it away thank you amy again my name is peter bespikos i'm very pleased and honored to be here today having heard the other presentations i'm i am today talking from my office i am a male with blonde hair and beard of our glasses wearing a navy jacket and tie and the only thing i'll say about my age is i'm not quite old enough to get half priced coffee from mcdonald's as yet so there's something to look forward to my role today is to give some context for what lara is going to talk about and to begin with we're talking about brain injury services and a program called resource facilitation which helps people with brain injury return to work and the importance of the the service standards that were developed for vocational rehabilitation counselors is that what we know is really quite new uh most of it's been developed over the last 10 years so let me give you a little bit of historical context and i promise not to go too far down this road if you look back at the the in intellectual developmental disability and mental health service systems which um provide you know lifelong post um disability service or post discharge from the hospital type services lifelong services in the communities what i'm trying to say the origins go back to the 1700s with changes that began converting them to community services in the 1920s really ramping up in the 1970s and 80s so there's a lot of history there and for much of it you have to turn to a history book if you want to understand the origins of what we hope will become a similar system for brain injury there are people still in the field who are forming that basis now so as you listen to lara talk today it's important whether you're a voc rehab agency or uh in some complementary discipline to understand these because they form the foundation of scientific discoveries that really have just emerged over the last 10 years and will help many people in serving folks with disabilities and i will close with just one further thought is that we've spent the last 10 years in indiana talking to service providers many reputable high quality well-respected service providers who say well two things we don't serve people with brain injury we refer them to others and to the extent that we have to do something we really understand the discipline and what we found is we teach them to screen for brain injury is that they discover that they are serving people with brain injury unbeknownst to them and they didn't know quite as much as they thought because the information is so new so this really is a budding field and the comments that lara will make will give you some foundational understanding of how to serve people in this area and with that i'm going to stop and turn this over to lara next slide please

thank you very much peter uh let's see i am a my name is lara trexler i work in indiana i am the acl grant clinical program manager i am i have gray hair i wear glasses i'm wearing a black shirt and i might break the mold here and not comment on age although everyone else has done it in such a graceful way okay let's jump right into the overview thank you for pulling up that slide i want to give you a bit of

background on so in 2018 the administration for community living awarded several states across the country the traumatic brain injury state partnership grant and identified nine work groups at that time that had common initiatives uh so several partners came together in this work group that's called the transition and employment work group those partners span across a variety of states indiana nebraska north carolina vermont iowa and colorado a critical component of our work group is to look at workforce training for service workers and other individuals who work in the system to support people with a brain injury our training infrastructure needs to take a look at core competencies for those professionals our particular work group decided to focus on the vocational rehabilitation arena first and take a look at are there competencies out there and what might they want to look like next slide

i want to take a moment to go back in time just for a little historical perspective so in 2008 indiana was awarded a grant from hersa at that time and the lead agency was vocational rehabilitation vocational rehabilitation partnered with the brain injury association of indiana and the rehabilitation hospital of indiana to conduct a variety of research randomized controlled research trials we are very fortunate to be able to recruit individuals with a traumatic brain injury to participate in research to examine the effectiveness of resource facilitation services a model of community reentry and employment facilitating return to work well we discovered through our randomized controlled trials that we were able to impact return to work and achieve up to 69 return to work ability compared to what had been published in the materials previously across the country was a rate that was closer to 20 to 30 percent for the individual with a moderate to severe brain injury so we discovered that the model that we were using was very impactful and we were able to go in indiana from our research to policy to practice and at the present time indiana vocational rehabilitation continues to fund those individuals that are seen eligible for vocational rehabilitation services they continue to fund resource facilitation we're very lucky that in indiana we've had the privilege of having grants since 2008 with a variety of partners indiana vocational rehabilitation being our first lead state agency and we moved into the department of corrections and the indiana department of health is our current lead agency next slide

so we're going to talk a bit about a process of determining exploring and maybe identifying vocational rehabilitation competencies and a competency self-assessment how did we get there next slide

this slide offers you an overview pictorial of several steps where i will be going into more detail but here i just want to highlight that we drafted some competencies we worked with a variety of subject matter experts across the country we had consultation with a variety of technical assistance centers and we did a literature and materials legacy materials review to develop our competencies and then we took some final steps to turn those competencies into a vrc competency self-assessment next slide

so regarding the drafted competencies individuals from each of the states in this work group reached out to a handful of vocational rehabilitation counselors and work group membership generated a variety of competencies we had approximately 42 competencies we decided to categorize those into different domains brain injury medical and rehabilitation was one domain employment competencies was a

second state local systems resources and service coordination was a third and then national resources and best practices so we really covered the waterfront with a variety of competencies next slide we took this list of competencies to a group that we called our first tier subject matter experts and this was casting a broad net once again into the vocational rehabilitation counselor arena across various states we had five states and we asked them to rate our competencies on a five-point likert scale what we discovered was that they determined that most of them were very or extremely important we were very pleased with that outcome of course we also conducted a literature review and looked at legacy materials from prior grants to look for alignment with the competencies that we had generated and to see if there was anything that we missed so many of our competencies were considered a very extremely important we moved into the next phase next slide now at this step we needed to also consult with the human services research institute and the technical assistance and resource center we wanted them to take a look at our competencies and help us determine if we had the language that was measuring what we wanted to measure a couple of editorial modifications were suggested and we made those changes and we moved into the next phase if you could go to the next slide please now we're reaching out to even more partners we have subject matter experts from washington virginia indiana and georgia individuals who are neuropsychologists or rehabilitation counselors researchers individuals who have published individuals who served as former administrators of bi services and we asked those parties also to rate the competencies on a five-point likert scale

we discovered that the competencies that we had at this point were considered relevant or highly relevant by this group of individuals as well we were pleased once again that we were seemed to be hitting the mark and we kept the competencies but we needed to add one a suggestion was made to add a competency about vocational assessment so we did another literature review and added a competency so at this point we're two and a half years into the process we finalized our list and we converted the document into a vrc competency self-assessment next slide this competency self-assessment also had a five-point scale it went from zero to five and i will show you that in just a moment um we kept all of the domains that we had originally this was delivered through surveymonkey we consulted with vocational rehabilitation leadership across various states and asked our vrc counselors to rate themselves their own self-perception of their level of expertise on each individual competency the survey takes about 10 to 15 minutes to complete next slide here you'll see that the scale was zero i have a sense that i do not have an understanding of this competency and then if you move into the next slide it goes all the way up to the level five i see myself as an expert i'm able to be sought out by others i can impact issues related to broader organizational change etc next slide now these next several slides there's one for each domain it does offer you the audience a couple examples of how the competencies are stated time doesn't really prevent us to go into those into any detail so i'm just going to ask donald if you could please take us to slide number 18 and folks if you want to make reference back to these slides to see some details of what those competencies look like that would be great so if we could go to slide 18.

laura do you mean um 58 for your slide deck just jumping in here oh thank you very much uh that's probably correct i'm sorry i didn't take that into consideration it it says current status at the top of the slide

oh you're getting closer i think we need to go back keep going there we go perfect thank you sorry for the confusion folks so we did close the survey down in february on the 12th and we had 269 respondents across four different states a lot of work still needs to be done before we can do any kind of nationwide vetting and acceptance of these competencies and we will look to acl for guidance on that but i can tell you that what we hope is that for the next grantee cycle perhaps our model could be a starting place for other grantees to look at workforce development competencies and other domains we're also going to distribute a report to each one of the states that completed this survey and we hope that they can use the information to plan education and training for their vocational rehabilitation counselors and we are currently taking a look at um a publication where we're underway actually if you could go to the next slide i'll just go very quickly through these i think we're getting close to our time there are several authors contributing to this publication once again partners from lots of different states uh we're doing some basic analyses uh statistical analyses to offer us information about differences in how counselors perceive themselves with those competencies that really as it relates to education or training etc next slide we hope that we will also generate some recommendations that will be useful to people such as suggestions for vr staff training or the establishment of best practices and perhaps the implementation of fidelity metrics and that takes me very close to the end lessons learned i've heard this theme over and over again today diversity at the table is very important we had to have a variety of partners who contributed to the this process and how we should proceed time we really needed as much time as we've utilized to develop these competencies communication i heard that theme as well several times today thoughtful communication needed to be considered what was communicated to whom when how frequently and then flexibility of course and how we went through this process and how we adjusted our document our tool and our product until we could get to what we perceive at this point as one of the most sophisticated versions but we hope that this work will continue in future grants as well thank you folks thank you indiana team if anybody has questions about the structure of their partnership just please leave them in the q a or the chatbot and chat box and we are happy to answer them for you uh what i'm going to do is read some of the questions that have been asked and some of the answers that have been provided first question was um how is tennessee works disseminated to audiences how does the general public learn about this service and the answer is information about tennessee works is disseminated through social media and also included in newsletters and other publications of our partners another question that we had asked to tennessee excellent work and outcomes you touched on the determination to keep going is there any discussion of braided funding to continue with your partnerships and wanda replied to that by stating monthly roundtable discussions in our strategic plan in mou helps us continue moving forward with joint funding and coordination of initiatives honestly the thing that keeps our partnership moving forward is just sheer personal determination commitment that results from our collaboration we had another question about the employment roundtable how are those meetings facilitated and coordinated if it's only state agencies is the dd council or use it involved for purposes of coordination the council convenes and facilitates the roundtable monthly in tennessee the council is a state agency so we are seen as a sister agency to other department the you said has always fit comfortably within the partnership there is a high level of trust one of the most valuable outcomes of the monthly meetings is communication across state agencies let's just filter in a few more questions this this is for team south carolina tennessee and louisiana employment first organizations and those stakeholder meetings that you have relative to that partnership are employers and businesses at the table and if so how did you get them to engage team

south carolina how did you talk about that first 14 south carolina answers uh asl interpreter 1 it looks like asl interpreter 2 is ready to take over

go ahead south carolina thank you yes that's a very interesting question so we do have employers engaged in our efforts in our statewide efforts we actually have them separate from our service providers we do help connect and bridge that partnership between the employers and the service providers however there is a separate group called the business coalition and that is actually led by employers so it is an organization where we were able to get a few companies to lead the initiative and so they're leading um other business people in in this initiative and from an advocacy standpoint we do play a role as an advocate and as a disability representation and then we help connect the employers to the different service providers because we know that you know in our world in our realm employers don't really need to know about our systems issues right they don't need to know and oftentimes they really don't care they just want good employees and they need help and technical assistance to help them get there and so that's kind of how we've worked it out in our state

thank you sandy chris from louisiana would you like to speak to that as well yes absolutely sorry took a second to find my mute button there um so in terms of the the project that we just talked about there were no employers at the tables mostly state agencies but in other collaboratives that i've been a part of particularly our employment first collaboratives we do uh encourage and we reach out to um chambers of commerce and the small business associations which have been really great partners uh and helping them recognize and understand all the benefits that go along with hiring people with disabilities so i think that is a an integral um stakeholder that oftentimes gets left out uh unfortunately you know we stack the table with people in the disability field and state agencies but forget about the employer so i think that's a great question

thank you chris and tennessee would you like to address that as well please i can repeat the question if need be i've got the question i'll start and then if wanda or lauren have anything to add much like the previous two speakers there are some employers involved but i think we all want more employers so i thought it might be helpful to say bringing our department of economic and community development to the roundtable has provided a new source of new employers coming into the state also through vocational rehabilitation they have a whole unit on business employment consultants and they're always very helpful and then through both project search which is growing with locations in tennessee and through our inclusive higher education alliance we're always on the lookout for new employers who are hiring people with disabilities and then we share information on the broader tennessee works partnership and other employment initiatives in our state yeah amy real quick i'll just make one other thing that i remember if you're really interested uh what i did one time i think it was in michigan i looked up all the um all the corporations and businesses in the state of michigan that had federal contracts and then uh this is under the obama administration i reminded them uh of their obligation to try and have a workforce with a certain percentage of people with disabilities as is their obligation so that was kind of neat so that might be an angle folks want to explore

thank you i'm going to move along to the next question for any of the presenters so we can address each of the teams can go into detail about this i would love to hear how your partnerships have discussed ways to re-engage employment first efforts with the impact of covid it has been a real challenge in our state and would love to hear any and all strategies that you have implemented

i'll actually let cheryl take this question for the south carolina team because i know that they've they've been done a really great job with kind of engaging some of their students with coven and the community at large it's been extremely difficult i'm not going to sit here and lie and say that it hasn't been you know you really have to think outside of the box and one of the things that we have um try to

i want to say reinvent but reinvigorate is our school-based enterprise um so one of the things that we did the majority of our students are virtual um whether that was when the district closed down it was mandatory a lot of our parents elected to keep our kids virtual so what we have to do is move our school-based enterprise for example to the home so we have weekly um meetings with our our our teachers we call them production managers in terms of our school-based enterprise and we have those parents come they willingly come they pick up the supplies for the school-based enterprise the kids and the families are doing them at home there's a day that they come and drop off the pieces that they're they're making at home to get their work hours in um we do have voc rehab who has placed two students on um internships one at our local department store and hopefully that student will get hired so we just had to do what we we what we could in terms of with the skills that we were targeting those employment skills we just did it at home virtually with a drop and drive kind of philosophy with getting the supplies to the parents and students i can tell you that it has been impactful for parents to actually see their students working because um where there were some parents that didn't think that their students actually had those skills having the school-based enterprise in the home has given the parent a new philosophy of all the things that their students actually can do um so that has been a great experience and um we hope to to get more parents to to talk about all the different school school-based enterprise all the different jobs that they want their students to do so for us having the parents see firsthand what working looks like even if it's a simulated environment at home has created more opportunities for conversation about paid employment and i hope i answered your question

thank you team south carolina i understand that we have some questions that were collected from the chat box we still have a couple of questions in the q a but to ensure that we're answering questions from both areas i want to turn it over to serena who has gathered i think maybe one more question that we have before we wrap up is that right serena yeah just a quick question and i think it might have already been answered but it was um the question was did you include long-term funding beyond the pie grant i think this is for south carolina and how will you sustain the excellent work and outcomes you've achieved in the future

yes serena that is a great question that is something we're looking at now actually because our high grant ends in august of this year and so that's something that we have been planning for as a center for independent living we have been an employment network under the social security administration for seven years now um and so we do have some unrestricted funding um that we've collected over you know these past seven years that we hope will help us continue the work we are looking at some other grants and initiatives we actually just received a grant from the reeve foundation um and and also there um a lot of our partners at the table um are not paid um and so it's really a lot of it is our own staff time um energy and um and meetings and things like that so um we definitely think that um that we'll be able to continue a lot of the work and if sandy if i could just add um just going through this process with sandy and her team this is work that we want to continue regardless if the grant is there or not it has been very very impactful for us so we hope that we can continue to have our meetings with all of the different partners as a part of the program but if not south carolina team will definitely continue this framework

okay thanks thank you very much team south carolina turn that turning that back over to sireena low i think that's the end of um the questions from chad i'm going to try to just grab indiana very quickly and in about 30 seconds could you let us know when and how indiana plans to share the vrc competencies with the field

hello folks i was just answering that thank you for asking we will be turning in the individual state reports and the entire cohort report to acl at the end of our grant cycle which is may and we hope to also submit for a publication in may and we will see what happens after that so hopefully sometime this year the information will be more broadly disseminated thank you for asking great thank you so much we are right at time um we did have one question related to the involvement and engagement of tribal tvr programs and if the individual could identify themselves in a message to the panelists we will get back to you as soon as possible if we could turn to the last slide um cheering it i just want to make you guys a feel uh aware that we did launch um our new website uh last week on march 12th and we'd love for you all to check it out and give us your feedback there's obviously some areas that will be growing over time but we'd love to show it to you and we think it's very dynamic and it will serve as our central vehicle for getting information out if you have not already done so please take an opportunity when you get on the website to register for our national community of practice so that you will receive regular emails and updates from the center about upcoming opportunities to receive additional training and technical assistance and just to as a quick reminder to all aod grantees that are participating in the center we do have an on-demand ta feature for you if you've got kind of a critically time sensitive question or need some help troubleshooting on a particular issue you can email us at aod employment ta gmail.com someone will return your message within 24 hours and then we will field your issues to one or more of our smes we really appreciate everybody's participation i hope um you all feel as uh excited and and uh ginned up as we do want to thank our panelists one more time uh for um just your your excellent uh work and for sharing with us some of your best practices uh again we hope everyone will join us um i i believe our um our webinars will be uh on the second monday of every month at this time and we look forward to working with all of you in the future thank you so much and have a great day

you