

3160

#14-540-(30)

Kroh, Karen

From: PW, ODPComent
Sent: Tuesday, December 13, 2016 3:20 PM
To: Kroh, Karen
Subject: FW: Comments on Proposed Waiver renewals
Attachments: Personal Commentary by John J. Alex.doc

Karen, the word document attached mentions regulations in the very last paragraph so I am forwarding it to you. I will also respond from the waiver renewal perspective. Thanks.

From: John J. Alex: [<mailto:jalex@apspackage.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, December 13, 2016 11:11 AM
To: PW, ODPComent
Subject: Comments on Proposed Waiver renewals

3160

Personal Commentary on Proposed Pennsylvania Waiver Renewal Service Definitions

By John J. Alex

December 3, 2016

RECEIVED

IRRC

2016 DEC 16 AM 9: 51

I would like to comment on the new waiver regulations that have just been published. Although I am an APS employee, I would like to speak as a person with a disability. Through a genetic abnormality, I was not able to walk. I spent much of my childhood (sometimes for weeks or months) as a patient in Shriners Hospital for Crippled Children in Philadelphia. I saw first hand the ravages of polio, severe burns, damaged muscles, and neurological impairments. I am eternally grateful to the Doctors and the staff at Shriners. I was able to attend college through grant monies from OVR and became a teacher. As a special education teacher, I came in contact with Jay Belding, the founder of APS. Jay was also a special education teacher, and invited me to join APS. Jay's idea was to marry a business enterprise to social service agency. My first assignment was to integrate individuals from Pennhurst into our work a day world. After many initial difficulties, I became mentor and friend. Jay continued to develop operations that would integrate individuals with disabilities into mainstream businesses. In 1987 I was given the assignment of starting our first affirmative industry. I worked with a half a dozen individuals to integrate into our bagel chip night shift. In 1998 I was diagnosed with terminal cancer. Through some miracle, I was able to fully recover. Jay then asked me to work in Northampton County. We had been asked to develop a vocational program for mental health consumers who needed income to maintain subsidized housing. We developed several projects, and worked in conjunction with OVR to transition individuals to competitive employment.

Several years ago, we started a jelly fulfillment operation for farmers markets nationwide. We use computer programs to print and label jellies for markets across the country. We have integrated individuals with intellectual disabilities into this operation.

In our Warminster plant, we have developed a state of the art cough drop packaging operation. Our workers are integrated with non-disabled production workers. Through training and mentoring, we are able to place a wide variety of individuals into the operation.

Recently, we had one of the ODP consultants spend a day visiting and advising us on some future options regarding placement and transitional employment services. We work closely with OVR and the Private Industry Council to transition individuals to competitive employment. We are currently reviewing transitional and placement services.

We believe in Employment First. There are, however, a variety of reasons that some individuals need either a short term or long term sheltered work environment. I have experience with many of these reasons. As a person with a disability, I empathize with individuals with medical and psychological situations in which individuals need support. I also believe that every person with a disability wants to contribute their talents to the both the community, and our economy. In my mind, earning a paycheck is the most thrilling aspect of adult living. In his book, "Every Good Endeavor", Pastor Keller talks about how the dignity of work is one of the most important aspects of our spiritual life. Earning a paycheck through competitive, supported, transitional, or sheltered employment is a most worthy goal. The proposed new Pennsylvania waiver service definitions and regulations would greatly curtail vocational choices of individuals with intellectual disabilities. These regulations would also mean the death of APS. APS means so much to so many individuals. Please don't cause it to die.