

EXAMPLES OF EMPLOYMENT FIRST DEFINITION & PRINCIPLES

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EMPLOYMENT FIRST refers to the affirmation in state and federal public policies, legislative statutes, regulations and operational procedures that “employment in integrated settings at minimum wage or higher with commensurate benefits” is a priority objective and preferred outcome of publicly-financed services furnished to people with intellectual, developmental and other disabilities; including persons with the most disabilities requiring significant supports, based on the following principles:

1. Disability is a natural part of the human experience that in no way diminishes the right of individuals with disabilities, including individuals with the most disabilities requiring significant supports, to achieve the four goals of disability policy—equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living and economic self-sufficiency.
2. Self-determination and informed choice among citizens with disabilities are essential elements in all programs and service options. Employment should be an expected life activity for individuals with disabilities requiring significant supports.
3. Work is physical or mental effort directed toward production of goods, the provision of services, or the accomplishment of a goal.
4. Integrated employment, (defined as work compensated at minimum or prevailing wages with related health and employment benefits, occurring in a typical work setting where the employee with a disability interacts or has the opportunity to interact continuously with non-disabled co-workers, has an opportunity for advancement and mobility and is preferably engaged full time) is a valued activity for all individuals and society.
5. All individuals, including individuals with the most disabilities requiring significant supports, should have access to every opportunity to engage in integrated employment, pursue careers, and engage actively in the economic mainstream.
6. Individuals with disabilities, including individuals with the most disabilities requiring significant supports, should be empowered and supported to attain the highest possible wage with benefits and be employed in integrated settings, consistent with their interests, strengths, priorities, abilities, and capabilities.
7. Direct supports should be based on a presumption that citizens with disabilities, including individuals with the most disabilities requiring significant supports, can achieve integrated employment with appropriate services and supports.
8. Employment-related training services and supports (including prevocational services) should be focused primarily on assisting individuals with the most disabilities requiring significant supports to become employed in integrated employment.
9. Based on information from the employment marketplace, employment-related training services and supports should target areas of present and future workforce growth. Input from employers is critical to effectively direct employment-related training and services.

10. Service providers are expected to use best, promising, emerging practices with respect to the provision of employment-related services and supports.
11. Technical assistance should be available to service providers for the purpose of expanding and improving their capacity to provide supported employment services, customized employment strategies, and other services and supports resulting in integrated employment as the preferred outcome consistent with best, promising and emerging practices.
12. Supports should be provided for as long as needed with a focus on use of natural occurring supports as much as possible.
13. Increasing the options for integrated employment will need to take into consideration the modification of a seamless system of services, supports and funding involving all agencies responsible for providing such services. Such modifications must be reflective of the full and informed choice and self-determination of the individual, family and other advocates on behalf of and chosen by the individual regarding the options available under Employment First. Additionally, infrastructure and resource allocation (staff time and funding) must reflect the preference for integrated employment. Other employment activities and training (including prevocational services) should be directed toward increasing integrated employment for all persons with disabilities.
14. Exploitation of workers with disabilities is abhorrent and workers should enjoy meaningful and effective protections against exploitation.

Coalition to Promote Self-Determination

Employment First is a service delivery strategy regarding the use of public funding for persons with disabilities, including persons with the most significant disabilities, which effectuates on a systemic basis the principles set out below. The strategy supports the primary or preferred employment outcome of integrated employment at minimum and prevailing wages for persons with disabilities including those with the most significant disabilities. The strategy includes the issuance and implementation of policies, practices, and procedures promulgated through federal and state statutes, regulations, and/or operational procedures, including policies, practices, and procedures requiring that systems have a statutory responsibility to provide services that align their reimbursement practices, policies and guidance to incent, encourage and fund services and supports that lead to integrated employment.

1. Disability is a natural part of the human experience that in no way diminishes the right of individuals with disabilities, including individuals with the most significant disabilities, to achieve the four goals of disability policy—equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living and economic self-sufficiency.
2. Self-determination and informed consumer choice are essential elements in all programs and service options related to employment.
3. Employment, or work for pay, is a valued activity both for individuals and society. Employment provides both tangible and intangible benefits. Employment helps people achieve independence and economic self-sufficiency. Employment also gives people purpose, dignity, self-esteem, and a sense of accomplishment and pride.

4. All individuals, including individuals with the most significant disabilities, should enjoy every opportunity to be employed in the workforce, pursue careers, advance professionally, and engage actively in the economic marketplace.
5. Individuals with disabilities, including individuals with the most significant disabilities, should be empowered to attain integrated employment with the highest possible wage with benefits, consistent with their interests, strengths, priorities, abilities, and capabilities.
6. It is presumed that all individuals with disabilities, including individuals with the most significant disabilities, can achieve integrated employment with appropriate services and supports.
7. Employment-related training services and supports should be provided to assist individuals with the most significant disabilities to become employed with a priority for integrated employment. Other employment activities and training (including prevocational services), while existing, shall be directed toward integrated employment for all citizens with disabilities.
8. Based on information from the employment marketplace, services and supports related to the provision of employment and training should target areas of present and future workforce growth. Input from employers and knowledge of the marketplace is critical to effectively direct employment-related training and services.
9. Service providers are expected to use best, promising, emerging practices with respect to the provision of employment-related services and supports.
10. Technical assistance should be available to service providers for the purpose of expanding and improving their capacity to provide supported employment, customized employment, and other services and supports that will enhance opportunities for integrated employment consistent with best, promising and emerging practices.
11. Supports should be provided for as long as needed, with a focus on the use of naturally-occurring supports.
12. The prioritization of integrated employment must reflect an establishment of infrastructure and resource allocations that coordinates multiple systems through an alignment of common objectives, targeted outcomes, performance measures and funding mechanisms while simultaneously ensuring a seamless delivery of supports and services at an individual level.
13. Exploitation of workers with disabilities is abhorrent and workers should enjoy meaningful and effective protections against exploitation.

JUSTICE FOR ALL ACTION NETWORK (JFAAN)

EMPLOYMENT FIRST.-- Refers to the affirmation in state and federal public policies, legislative statutes, regulations and operational procedures that “employment in integrated settings at minimum wage or higher with commensurate benefits” is a priority objective and preferred outcome of publicly-financed services furnished to people with intellectual, developmental and other disabilities; including persons with the most disabilities requiring significant supports, based on the following principles:

- (I) Disability is a natural part of the human experience that in no way diminishes the right of individuals with disabilities, including individuals with the most disabilities requiring significant supports, to achieve the four goals of disability policy—equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living and economic self-sufficiency.
- (II) Self-determination and informed choice among citizens with disabilities are essential elements in all programs and service options. Employment should be an expected life activity for individuals with disabilities requiring significant supports.
- (III) Work is physical or mental effort directed toward production of goods, the provision of services, or the accomplishment of a goal.
- (IV) Integrated employment, (defined as work compensated at minimum or prevailing wages with related health and employment benefits, occurring in a typical work setting where the employee with a disability interacts or has the opportunity to interact continuously with non-disabled co-workers, has an opportunity for advancement and mobility and is preferably engaged full time) is a valued activity for all individuals and society.
- (V) All individuals, including individuals with the most disabilities requiring significant supports, should have access to every opportunity to engage in integrated employment, pursue careers, and engage actively in the economic mainstream.
- (VI) Individuals with disabilities, including individuals with the most disabilities requiring significant supports, should be empowered and supported to attain the highest possible wage with benefits and be employed in integrated settings, consistent with their interests, strengths, priorities, abilities, and capabilities.
- (VII) Direct supports should be based on a presumption that citizens with disabilities, including individuals with the most disabilities requiring significant supports, can achieve integrated employment with appropriate services and supports.
- (VIII) Employment-related training services and supports should be focused primarily on assisting individuals with the most disabilities requiring significant supports to become employed with a priority toward integrated employment.
- (IX) Based on information from the employment marketplace, employment-related training services and supports should target areas of present and future workforce growth. Input from employers is critical to effectively direct employment-related training and services.
- (X) Service providers are expected to use best, promising, emerging practices with respect to the provision of employment-related services and supports.
- (XI) Technical assistance should be available to service providers for the purpose of expanding and improving their capacity to provide supported employment services, customized employment strategies, and other services and supports resulting in integrated employment as the preferred outcome consistent with best, promising and emerging practices.
- (XII) Supports should be provided for as long as needed with a focus on use of natural occurring supports as much as possible.
- (XIII) Increasing the options for integrated employment will need to take into consideration the modification of a seamless system of services, supports and funding involving all agencies responsible for providing such services. Such modifications must be reflective of the full and informed choice and self-determination of the individual, family and other advocates on behalf of and chosen by the individual regarding the options available under Employment First. Additionally, infrastructure and resource allocation (staff time and funding) must reflect the

preference for integrated employment. Other employment outcomes, while existing, should be directed toward increasing integrated employment for all persons with disabilities.

(XIV) Exploitation of workers with disabilities is abhorrent and workers should enjoy meaningful and effective protections against exploitation.

ACCSES / Bobby Silverstein

EMPLOYMENT FIRST.-- Refers to the affirmation in state and federal public policies, legislative statutes, regulations and operational procedures that “employment in integrated settings at minimum wage or higher with commensurate benefits” is a priority objective and preferred outcome of publicly-financed services furnished to people with intellectual, developmental and other disabilities; including persons with the most significant disabilities, based on the following principles:

(XV) Disability is a natural part of the human experience that in no way diminishes the right of individuals with disabilities, including individuals with the most significant disabilities, to achieve the four goals of disability policy—equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living and economic self-sufficiency.

(XVI) Self-determination and informed choice among citizens with disabilities are essential elements in all programs and service options. Employment should be an expected life activity for individuals with significant disabilities. Self-determination provides the right to direct the type and manner of employment and provides individuals a way to opt out of working for those who prefer a different lifestyle.

(XVII) Work is physical or mental effort directed toward production of goods, the provision of services, or the accomplishment of a goal. Integrated employment, (defined as work compensated at minimum or prevailing wages with related health and employment benefits, occurring in a typical work setting where the employee with a disability interacts or has the opportunity to interact continuously with non-disabled co-workers, has an opportunity for advancement and mobility and is preferably engaged full time) is a valued activity for all individuals and society.

(XVIII) All individuals, including individuals with the most significant disabilities, should have access to every opportunity to engage in integrated employment, , pursue careers, and engage actively in the economic mainstream.

(XIX) Individuals with disabilities, including individuals with the most significant disabilities, should be empowered and supported to attain the highest possible wage with benefits and be employed in integrated settings, consistent with their interests, strengths, priorities, abilities, and capabilities.

(XX) Direct supports should be based on a presumption that citizens with disabilities, including individuals with the most significant disabilities, can achieve integrated employment with appropriate services and supports.

(XXI) Employment-related training services and supports should be focused primarily on assisting individuals with the most significant disabilities to become employed with a priority toward integrated employment.

(XXII) Based on information from the employment marketplace, employment-related training services and supports should target areas of present and future workforce growth. Input from employers is critical to effectively direct employment-related training and services.

(XXIII) Service providers are expected to use best, promising, emerging practices with respect to the provision of employment-related services and supports.

(XXIV) Technical assistance should be available to service providers for the purpose of expanding and improving their capacity to provide supported employment, customized employment, and other services and supports that will enhance opportunities for integrated employment consistent with best, promising and emerging practices.

(XXV) Supports should be provided for as long as needed with a focus on use of natural occurring supports as much as possible.

(XXVI) There is a need for a seamless system of services, supports and funding involving all agencies responsible to provide services if we are to increase options for competitive, integrated employment. The seamless system must include the establishment of infrastructures and resource allocation (staff time and funding) that reflect the preference for integrated employment while acknowledging access to a full range of employment options based on informed choice and self determination.

(XXVII) Exploitation of workers with disabilities is abhorrent and workers should enjoy meaningful and effective protections against exploitation.

APSE Statement on Employment First

Employment in the general workforce is the first and preferred outcome in the provision of publicly funded services for all working age citizens with disabilities, regardless of level of disability.

Underlying Principles

- The current low participation rate of citizens with disabilities in the workforce is unacceptable.
- Access to “real jobs with real wages” is essential if citizens with disabilities are to avoid lives of poverty, dependence, and isolation.
- It is presumed that all working age adults and youths with disabilities can work in jobs fully integrated within the general workforce, working side-by-side with co-workers without disabilities, earning minimum wage or higher.
- As with all other individuals, employees with disabilities require assistance and support to ensure job success and should have access to those supports necessary to succeed in the workplace.
- All citizens, regardless of disability, have the right to pursue the full range of available employment opportunities, and to earn a living wage in a job of their choosing, based on their talents, skills, and interests.
- Implementation of Employment First principles must be based on clear public policies and practices that ensure employment of citizens with disabilities within the general workforce is the priority for public funding and service delivery.
- Inclusion or exclusion of the specific term “Employment First” does not determine whether a public system or agency has adopted Employment First principles. Such a determination can only be made in examining whether the underlying policies, procedures and infrastructure are designed for and ultimately result in increased integrated employment in the general workforce for citizens with disabilities.

Characteristics of Successful Implementation of Employment First

- There are measurable increases in employment of citizens with disabilities within the general

workforce, earning minimum wage or higher with benefits.

- Greater opportunities exist for citizens with disabilities to pursue self-employment and the development of microenterprises.
- Employment is the first and preferred option when exploring goals and a life path for citizens with disabilities.
- Citizens with disabilities are employed within the general workforce, regardless of the severity of disability and assistance required.
- Young people with disabilities have work experiences that are typical of other teenagers and young adults.
- Employers universally value individuals with disabilities as an integral part of their workforce, and include people with disabilities within general recruitment and hiring efforts as standard practice.
- Individuals with disabilities have increased incomes, financial assets, and economic wealth.
- Citizens with disabilities have greater opportunities to advance in their careers, by taking full advantage of their individual strengths and talents.
- Funding is sufficient so that quality services and supports are available as needed for longterm employment success.
- A decision not to consider employment in the community for an individual is re-evaluated on a regular basis; the reasons and rationale for this decision are fully documented and addressed in service provision.

Wisconsin Managed Care and Employment Task Force Policy Statement on Employment

The Managed Care and Employment Task Force shares the Department's goals for Wisconsin citizens with disabilities through community inclusion, maximizing the respect and dignity afforded people with disabilities by their fellow community members, and ensuring that citizens with disabilities have access to the same set of choices and opportunities available to citizens without disabilities.

In support of these goals, the Task Force seeks to promote opportunities for persons with disabilities to be involved and contributing members of their communities. As citizens, everyone is expected to contribute to the community in some way. Employment is one of the primary ways people contribute to the community as it provides

- The opportunity to earn income, to achieve greater stability and financial security, and to use that income to enrich one's life based on one's responsibilities, interests and preferences
- The opportunity to have meaningful and enjoyable social interactions and to develop relationships and friendships
- The opportunity to pursue activities that are enjoyable, stimulating, and provide one with a sense of purpose and a feeling of self-worth
- The opportunity to ensure the best possible health by counteracting the negative mental and physical health effects of unemployment and poverty
- The opportunity to reduce reliance on public benefits
- The opportunity to contribute to the economic well being of the community and state

Despite the many benefits associated with employment, individuals with disabilities have significantly higher unemployment rates than those without disabilities, and are three times more likely to live in poverty than those without disabilities. Unemployment and poverty are associated with increased mental and physical health problems. The pursuit of employment is hindered by a Social Security system that requires proof of inability to work in order to establish and maintain eligibility for income support benefits. Difficulty in meeting the Social Security criteria raises fear of benefit loss among many beneficiaries when return to work is contemplated or pursued. The reasons for the lack of participation in employment by individuals with disabilities are complex, but it is clear that the long-term care system has a critical role to play in supporting individuals with disabilities to consider, pursue, and maintain employment.

A principle goal of Wisconsin's managed care long-term care system is to give people more and better choices about the services and supports available to meet their needs. Given this, any policy regarding employment in managed care should vigorously safeguard individual informed choice while promoting more and better choices consistent with the Department's declared policy goals for individuals with disabilities. Therefore, the Task Force recommends and supports the following employment policy statement for the managed care long-term care system:

*Among employment options, integrated employment offers people with disabilities the greatest access to full community inclusion and employment choices equal to those available to citizens without disabilities. Integrated employment at a competitive wage offers individuals a meaningful path toward economic security and the respect and dignity associated with employment that is enjoyed by working citizens without disabilities. Therefore, while always respecting individual, informed choice, because integrated employment provides access to the fullest range of employment choices and outcomes, better opportunities for community integration, and meaningful earnings for members, **the managed care long-term care system should support integrated employment as the preferred employment option.***

In support of this policy statement, the Task Force expects that the managed care long-term care system will

- Make work and career a primary, consistent, and on-going focus

- Presume that persons who express a desire to work are able to, and not presume that people who express no interest in work are not able to
- Provide everyone with the opportunity to regularly consider integrated employment as one of the ways they can choose to spend their time as a meaningful way to contribute to their community
- Explore with each individual the option of identifying integrated employment as a desired outcome, as part of comprehensive, person-centered, outcomes-based service planning
- Regularly offer, as part of outcomes and service planning, choices that can assist individuals participating in sheltered employment at less than minimum wage the opportunity to transition to integrated employment at a competitive wage
- Provide everyone with the information and assistance needed to make an informed choice about working. To this end, the variety of options for working will be explained as part of ensuring informed choice. Those who choose to pursue work shall be provided with the information and assistance they need to make an informed choice about what kind of work they wish to pursue and the services and/or supports they need to do this
- Provide outcomes-based service planning that takes advantage of the services, supports, and resources available through comprehensive coordination with other systems and programs
- Provide support from the long-term care system to pursue and obtain integrated work at a competitive wage, with the necessary accommodations, services, supports, and assistive technology
- Invest resources and effort in the development of the long-term care system's capacity to support everyone who chooses integrated work, and in the provision of a diverse and comprehensive range of services and supports for integrated employment which use evidence-based, best-practice approaches
- Increase the number of long-term care recipients who are supported in pursuing and maintaining integrated employment at a competitive wage

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

Integrated employment refers to working for a competitive wage in a community-based job (i.e., a job that is not based in a community rehabilitation facility or residential long-term care institution for people with disabilities). The employment must be in a work setting where, to the extent the employment typically involves interaction with others, the interaction is predominantly with co-workers or business associates who do not have disabilities or with the general public. Integrated employment includes employment located in a community business, self-employment and ownership of a micro-enterprise.

Competitive wage means a payment for work that is generally equivalent to the payment made to others performing similar work. Competitive wage does not mean commensurate wage or special minimum wage (sub-minimum wage).