



Employment First should produce opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities to obtain jobs that they have chosen and feel comfortable doing (self-determination), are situated in locations typical of that kind of work (community-based), provide compensation on par with their non-disabled counterparts in like positions (competitive employment), and are performed alongside co-workers without disabilities (integrated setting). A policy or initiative which produces an outcome that lack one or more of these pillars should not be considered true Employment First.

-National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities

Introduction

The Ohio Employment First Taskforce agencies agree that community employment should be the first option for all working age adults and transition-age youth with developmental disabilities. Employment First is a philosophy of service that presumes that all Ohioans with significant disabilities can and should have opportunities to work in the community.

Meaningful work has significant benefits for all working age adults, including people with developmental disabilities. People with developmental disabilities have the right to make informed decisions about where they work, and to have opportunities to obtain community jobs that result in greater earnings, better benefits, improved health and enhanced quality of life. In addition, meaningful employment offers individuals with developmental disabilities the opportunity to bolster self-esteem, expand their network of natural supports, make friends, and demonstrate their professional abilities in a public setting. These benefits all contribute to the diversity of our workforce and enrichment of our community.

Definitions

We shall adopt the following common definitions:

"Community employment" means employment which is competitive employment and takes place in an integrated setting.

"Competitive employment" means full-time or part-time work in the competitive labor market in which payment is at or above the minimum wage, but not less than the customary wage and level of benefits paid by employers for the same or similar work performed by persons who are not disabled.

"Integrated setting" means an employment setting typically found in the community where individuals interact with persons who do not have disabilities to the same extent non-disabled persons in comparable positions interact with other persons. "Integrated setting" includes employment settings where employees interact with the community via technology.

The Employment First Taskforce agencies agree that Ohio needs a coordinated state effort that examines existing practices in our system to identify and address barriers to employment for people with developmental disabilities.

In support of the above goal, the Employment First Taskforce agencies agree to the following:

1. We shall conduct an examination of our existing funding, policies, practices and roles and responsibilities at a state and local level that support or hinder the community employment of Ohioans with developmental disabilities in order to maximize the use of existing resources and funding streams for services.
2. We shall support the development or review of specific state-level Interagency Agreements between individual Taskforce agencies to ensure coordination of services, as appropriate, with the objective of increasing opportunities for community employment for Ohioans with developmental disabilities.
3. We shall review information and data provided from local community planning teams (or other sources) to identify successes and address barriers to community employment.
4. We shall agree to include in our technical guidance to the field, information on increasing employment opportunities for Ohioans with developmental disabilities.
5. We shall agree to promote local participation in multi-agency collaborations to identify community needs, address sustainability of systems and emphasize best practices to improve community employment outcomes. Local MOUs or agreements should support Employment First principles and remove barriers to community employment whenever possible. This includes the braiding of local funds and resources.
6. We shall develop and approve cross-agency tools and processes to share information as appropriate in order to prevent duplication in eligibility, enrollment, assessment and planning.
7. We shall develop a consistent message around skills and competencies of service providers that must be fostered across systems, including training and technical assistance of evidence-based practices. Target outcomes will include building capacity to support effective transitions to employment in the community.
8. We shall serve as members of the Employment First Taskforce and agree to actively and consistently participate, and to provide leadership and oversight of this systems change effort. Further, we agree to track and evaluate progress made towards the above goals and revise as necessary.

9. Agreed to by:



Date 7/1/13

 Department of
Developmental Disabilities

John Martin, Director
Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities



Date 8/23/13

 Department
of Education

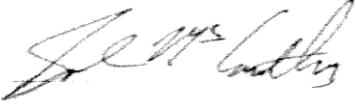
Richard Ross, Superintendent
Ohio Department of Education



Date 7/1/13

 Department of
Job and Family Services

Michael Colbert, Director
Ohio Department of Job and Family Services



Date 7/17/13

 Department of
Medicaid

John McCarthy, Director
Ohio Department of Medicaid



Date 9/6/13



Tracy Plouck, Director
Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services



Date 7/1/13

 Opportunities for Ohioans
with Disabilities Agency

Kevin Miller, Director
Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities Agency

Also in support of the Employment First Taskforce Common Principles:



Date 7/1/13



Carolyn Knight, Executive Director
Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council