

# The Summit County Employment First Interagency Agreement for Transition of Students with Disabilities to the Workforce



The Summit  
County  
Employment  
First Transition  
Youth Team  
Effective:

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## 1) What is Employment First?

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Employment First is a priority for the state of Ohio giving individuals with developmental disabilities access to services and supports to work in a competitive job in the community that offers the possibility of greater wealth, a greater quality of life and a sense of self-worth. Individuals can enhance their careers by utilizing their strengths and talents while giving employers access to dependable and qualified employees, and creating diversity for their businesses. Governor John Kasich officially launched Ohio's Employment First Initiative when he signed Executive Order 2012-05K on March 19, 2012. The Executive Order established statewide collaboration and coordination by creating the Employment First Taskforce and Advisory Committee, and made community employment the preferred outcome for individuals with developmental disabilities.

In order to make community employment the expected and preferred outcome for people with developmental disabilities, the Ohio DD system is required to align policies, procedures, eligibility, enrollment and planning for services across state agencies. Other requirements include development of universal tools for documentation, eligibility, selection, assessment and planning of services. Identification of best practices, partnerships, funding sources, opportunities for shared services among County Boards of DD and other providers is required along with expanding model programs. Expectations will be set for students with DD, ages 14 and up, transitioning from school settings to jobs in their communities to make sure they have access to community employment opportunities that utilize their skills and abilities ([www.ohioemploymentfirst.org](http://www.ohioemploymentfirst.org)).

## 2) Statement of Need

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The Employment First Initiative encourages collaboration among many partners. In Summit County, the Local Education Agencies (LEA's)/school districts in Summit County, the Summit County Board of Developmental Disabilities (Summit DD), Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD), and other community agency partners are collaborating together in order to enhance services and supports provided to youth with developmental disabilities who are transitioning from school to employment.

Federal and state regulations (Individuals with Disabilities Act, 2004) ensure that students with disabilities are provided a free, appropriate public education, thus entitling them to services and supports while in school. As students with disabilities transition from school into employment, a variety of supports are available to them from multiple agencies such as OOD, Summit DD, Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services (ODJFS), and many other community partners. At times families and students find accessing and coordinating these services difficult, leading to a challenging transition from secondary school to employment.

To assist students, their parents, and other stakeholders in Summit County, a multi-agency team convened to discuss how collaboration within Summit County can improve outcomes for transition aged youth with developmental disabilities and their families. As part of the planning process, a community wide needs assessment was conducted. Information gained from that assessment was used by the group to develop goals, objectives and action steps around providing youth a successful transition out of the educational setting and into a career in the community. As part of the plan, the team identified the need for improved communication and collaboration between agencies and organizations in Summit County resulting in the development of an interagency agreement between key partners in Summit County.

### 3) Purpose of the Agreement

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The purpose of this agreement is to assist (LEA's)/school districts in Summit County, OOD, Summit DD, and other community partners in establishing a framework that supports a unified system and prompts collaboration in providing services to youth with developmental disabilities in transition while making the best use of available resources and avoiding duplication of efforts.

### 4) Mission Statement

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The mission of the Summit County Transition Team is to work together to improve the coordination of services, ensuring that all youth and young adults with developmental disabilities have opportunities for employment in the community.

## 5) Authority and Scope

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Department of Education: Transition services are mandated under IDEA Section 300.154(a) (B), under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended Section 101(a) (11) (D), and under the Ohio Department of Education's State Operation Standards, 3301-51-07. The transition process for students with disabilities in Ohio begins at the age of 14, and continues until the student exits the school system.

Department of Developmental Disabilities: The DODD Employment First Rule creates the expectation that County Boards of Developmental Disabilities will collaborate with school districts to implement a framework that ensures the use of similar methods in supporting youth with developmental disabilities and to reduce duplication of efforts.

Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities: OOD provides Vocational Rehabilitation services to eligible students to assist young people in reaching the employment goals identified in their approved Individual Plan for Employment (IPE). The IPE drives the services that OOD provides to transition youth and adults.

## 6) Goals

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Signees of the Summit County Employment First Interagency Agreement concur that community employment should be the first employment option for all working aged adults and transition-aged youth with developmental disabilities and agree to the following:

- 1) We shall establish a baseline measurement of employment outcomes of youth with developmental disabilities and use this data to determine progress and effectiveness of targeted strategies and resources.
- 2) We shall develop a consistent message that promotes the presumptions that youth with developmental disabilities are capable of community employment.
- 3) We shall develop a training plan that will focus on increasing the skills and competencies of transition aged service providers (this language may need developed) on evidence-based practices which will include building capacity to support effective transitions to employment in the community.

- 4) We shall develop and support a shared process of communication and coordination practices, as appropriate, that will be used by all members.
- 5) We shall identify a continuum of services and education options that reflect evidence-based practices to prepare and support youth in community employment.
- 6) We shall serve, or appoint representatives to serve, as members of the Summit County Employment First Transition Team and agree to actively and consistently participate, and to provide leadership and oversight of this systems change effort.

### 7) Terms of Agreement

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Plan implementation date:

Subsequent revisions and/or reviews of the plan will be made as necessary but annually at a minimum.

Changes to the plan may be made by agreement of affected parties, with the revisions mailed to all parties. In the case of changes in statute, the changes will be incorporated into the plan and all parties notified of the changes.

### 8) Resolution of Conflicts

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For the resolution of disputes arising over issues addressed in this agreement, all parties will utilize appropriate steps and methods. Utilizing the information presented, a good faith effort will be made to reach a mutually satisfactory solution. Efforts must be made at each level of resolution in a timely manner.

### 9) Termination of Participating/Commitment

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In the event that an agency is unable to continue participation or commitment to this agreement, notification shall be made to the participating agencies.

### 10) Signatures:

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