

CPSD's Definition & Principles of Employment First

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.