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## **Promoting Employment: Emphasis on Employment- First Policy**

**Need:** A clear focus in state policy leading to regulations that sets up a series of expectations that people will get jobs and will be employed in a meaningful opportunity to the individual is essential to the ensuring individuals with the most significant disabilities are encouraged to work.

**Intent:** Employment First policies clarify the role and intent of public resources in support of individuals with disabilities is to enable them to become self-sufficient, productive members of society, to hold down meaningful, customized employment and to participate and contribute in a meaningful way to society.

**Rationale:** Employment First policy sets a clear framework around employment, and also anchors other policies developed in support of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. Service delivery systems are encouraged to transition as well to more modern approaches so that they do not continue to perpetuate isolating non-employment focused services.

**Key Elements:** State Employment First policies target a wide range of policies, operational practices, funding methodologies and training procedures that are designed to significantly improve the number of individuals with developmental disabilities who are employed in integrated community jobs. Key elements include:<sup>1</sup>

- Adopting rules reaffirming that ‘integrated employment’ is considered the primary service option for adults receiving Day Habilitation Services and Supports (CO).
- Including requirements that integrated employment be addressed in each recipient’s Individual Service Plan (ISP) each time such a plan is developed, revised or reviewed (CO).
- Developing and implementing specific target goals including identified percentage of persons who are in non-work and sheltered employment that will move to integrated employment by a designated time with specific benchmarks established at two time intervals over a five year period) (FL).
- Providing mandates to state local offices in the form of an administrative directive from the agency leadership requiring the redirection of at least 5% per year from Adult Day Training to employment (FL).

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.



- Establishing through state code the goal of full time employment as the optimal outcome of day service delivery, but allowing for part time employment when deemed in the best interest of the individual consumer and if no jobs are available on a temporary basis voluntary work (only if in accord with Department of Labor regulations) (OK).
- Including statutory provisions requiring that persons with mental retardation have access to employment and the training necessary to sustain employment (PA).
- Identifying employment as the first “day service” that should be explored (TN).
- Identifying employment as the most appropriate service unless there is a compelling reason for recommending another service (TN).
- Including provisions to ensure that choice is essential and assistance should be provided to help consumers in finding and changing jobs reflecting interest and skills (TN).
- Including provisions to ensure that jobs offer advancement (career development) if the person so chooses (TN, WA).
- Requiring that services support a job for everyone who wants one (TN).
- Providing supports to pursue and maintain gainful employment in integrated settings in the community shall be the primary service option for working age adults and any deviation will need authorization (WA).
- Requiring that steps be taken toward integrated employment for those individuals not currently working in such settings (WA).
- Ensuring the capability to track changes and work status over time (PA, WA).
- Furnishing technical assistance to providers if employment first as a practice is to be successful (WA).