



Employment of People with Developmental Disabilities

Updated January 2015

People with developmental disabilities, regardless of the severity of disability, should have access to integrated, competitive and community-based employment.

Segregating people in congregate work situations limits access to real, dignified and meaningful employment. Louisiana citizens with developmental disabilities need to participate in the integrated, competitive workforce to have opportunities that realize their full potential and shift their need for dependency on the state. The DD Council supports full adoption of an Employment First policy in all agencies so that employment is considered as the first and preferred service option and outcome. According to data published from 2012, the latest year for which data is available, by the Institute for Community Inclusion, Louisiana continues to over-rely on congregate work situations and under-perform in supporting real job experiences for people with significant disabilities.¹

People with developmental disabilities deserve individualized work evaluation and job readiness services, assistive technology, and job counseling, and if necessary, ongoing supports, to enable them to become employed, productive, tax-paying citizens and reduce or eliminate their need for public assistance. Supporting integrated employment builds an individual's earning capacity and future employment prospects, expands their choices and natural support network. It also offers increased opportunities for participation in community events and activities and developing meaningful relationships.

Adequate funding should be invested in supports and services that result in people becoming more self-reliant and increasing their productivity. Rates for services should incentivize real employment outcomes and dis-incentivize segregated sheltered workshops.

It is time to invest in Louisiana's people and implement policies, such as Employment First and those in WIOA and the new Medicaid rule on HCBS, which result in "equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency."²

Recommendations:

1. Provide La. Rehabilitation Services a state match which would draw down 100% of its federal allotment.
2. Convert segregated work programs to provide individualized integrated community-based employment.
3. Implement an adequate provider rate structure to adequately fund supported employment providers and incentivize the provision of integrated competitive employment services.
4. Develop person-centered assessments targeted to individualized vocational interests and outcomes.



5. Ensure a stable workforce of employment support staff who earn a living wage with benefits.
 6. Ensure a qualified workforce of employment staff who support people with the most significant disabilities obtaining and maintaining integrated community-based employment.
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References:

- ¹ Butterworth, J., Smith, F., Hall, A., Migliore, A. & Winsor, J., Domin, D., Timmons, J. (2013). State Data: The national report on employment services and outcomes, 2011. Institute for Community Inclusion, Boston.
- ² Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C.A. § 12101 et seq.