

**Draft Outline**  
*Updated in Green 06/06/17*  
**Louisiana Employment First Report**

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**Vision Statement**

**1. Louisiana Employment First Background**

Background on Employment First efforts in Louisiana to date:

- OCDD policy and efforts
- Development of work group
- List of work group members

**2. National Context for Employment First**

- Discussion of Employment First nationally and policy context for Employment First
- U.S. Department of Justice efforts,
- CMS settings rule
- WIOA- 4 sections: Title 1, Rehab Act, Adult ed literacy, ~~walser-pilsner~~ Wagner-Peyser Act
- National Governor's Association Better Bottom Line Initiative

**3. The Disability Service System**

Short overview of disability service system with a one paragraph description of each.

- Louisiana Rehabilitation Services
- Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD)
  - Local Governing Entity (LGE)/Human Service Districts or Authorities
- Office of Behavioral Health
- **LWC- Office of Workforce Development (Career Services)**
- Department of Education and Local Educational Agencies
- State Medicaid Agency
- Social Security Administration
  - Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA)
- The Advocacy Center (Protection and Advocacy)
- Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council
- LSU Human Development Center (University Center for Excellence on Developmental Disabilities)
- Service provider network
  - Including providers for individuals with sensory disabilities
  - **Employment providers**
  - **Independent living providers**

- [Support coordination](#)
- [Home and Community Based Waiver providers](#)
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#### 4. Louisiana Disability Employment By the Numbers

Graphic representation of current picture of employment of people with disabilities by the numbers in Louisiana. Suggested specific data elements will include:

- Percentage of individuals 18 to 64 with a disability (Louisiana and U.S.) – Source: U.S. Census
- Percentage of individuals 18 to 65 with a disability employed (Louisiana and U.S.) – Source U.S. Census
- Poverty gap – difference between those with and without disabilities living in poverty (Louisiana and U.S.) – Source: U.S. Census
- Percent of individuals with Developmental Disabilities employed (Louisiana and U.S.) - Source: National Core Indicators
- Percent of individuals with Developmental Disabilities who would like to work (Louisiana and U.S.) – Source: National Core Indicators
- LRS – Rehabilitation Rate (Louisiana and U.S.) – Source: RSA 911 or ICI StateData Book
- OCDD – percent in integrated employment services (Louisiana and U.S.) – Source: ICI survey of day and community services or Louisiana Medicaid data contractor
- Office of Behavioral Health – percent employed (Louisiana and U.S.) – Source: SAMHSA Uniform Reporting System
- Workforce Development (Louisiana and U.S.) – percent of customers with disabilities – Source: US Department of Labor Wagner-Peyser data
- % of individuals on SSI/SSDI (Louisiana and U.S.) – available from Disability Statistics Compendium
- % of individuals on SSI working (Louisiana and U.S.) – available from ICI StateData book
- Number served by agency

#### 5. Summary of Opportunities and Challenges

##### Opportunities

- A strategic effort to advance employment of citizens with disabilities in Louisiana will result in reduced reliance on public benefits and services, and increased tax revenues from individuals going to work, and other ripple effects to the economy of Louisiana.
- As part of Louisiana compliance with CMS settings rules, OCDD no longer will allow for payment of sub-minimum wage as of 2019, and will require integration within their groups.
- What about adding WIPA here. The information that can be provided by SWICs is invaluable to people with disabilities who want to work, but assure that they will have necessary benefits.
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Commented [BP1]: Include a link to OCDD Transition Plan

## Challenges

**Lack of state funding results in inability of Louisiana to draw down federal funding to provide employment services and supports. As a result, Louisiana is struggling to maintain the services it has to assist individuals with disabilities to succeed in employment, and is leaving significant federal funds “on the table”.**

### LRS Match Issue

For every \$3.69 in federal funds, the state must come up with a \$1 match. LRS has a federal allotment of \$53 million per year. LRS currently draws down approximately \$33 million per year. This lack of match is undermining the ability of LRS to meet the employment needs of Louisiana citizens with disabilities. Essentially LRS has only 2/3 of its potential resources. With approximately \$5 million of additional funds in state appropriations LRS could draw down its full federal allotment, and operate at full capacity. Currently LRS cannot provide services to new consumers and must put all eligible consumers on a deferred waiting list, which increases pressure on Medicaid waiver funded services. *(Mark Martin has PowerPoint on loss of funding over time and its impact, which may be useful to include as appendix.)*

### Medicaid Match Issue

Louisiana has a match rate for Medicaid of 65% (i.e., for every dollar of Medicaid expenditures, the federal government provides 65 cents and Louisiana provides 35 cents). Many employment services and supports, particularly for individuals with disabilities, particularly those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, are funded by Medicaid. OCDD currently has a waiting list of XX for services. Additional state funding of Medicaid would allow OCDD to draw down additional federal funds, and reduce the waiting list for services.

- 15,000 people currently on waiting list for Medicaid waiver services under Supports NOW Waiver (13 year waiting list);
- 1,700 individuals on waiting list for NOW-Supports waiver

**Culture of employment** – There is a lack of expectation of employment of individuals with disabilities.

**Transition** – Many students not receiving required transition services that will ensure a pathway to career success; parents are not aware of rights to transition services; segregation of students leads to segregation of adults in employment.

## 6. Plan Development and Implementation

**Commented [BP2]:** From the Advocacy Center: Among whom? Lack of expectation from employers, family members, people with disabilities? I'm concerned about this statement being offered uncritically, particularly as it is intended to relate to pwd themselves. If people's expectations are shaped by lack of opportunity, I don't think I'd call that a "culture," which I think is a loaded term. At the very least, this needs to be clarified.

- The recommendations within the report are based on the concept of S.M.A.R.T. goals and actions – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-Based
- Criteria: As much as possible, report recommendations meet the following criteria:
  - as much as possible, achievable via existing resources
  - strategic in terms of impacting core issues that will result in maximum impact in terms of advancing employment for Louisiana’s citizens with disabilities
  - leveraging of existing federal and state initiatives

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**Proposed Strategic Initiatives**

**A. Definition**

Clear cross-agency employment definition of employment based on WIOA definition that is considered as the goal for all individuals:

- Full-time or part-time work at minimum wage or higher
- Wages & benefits similar-equal to those without disabilities performing the same work
- Fully integrated with co-workers without disabilities
- Must be in a location typically found in the community
- Both within the work unit and entire workplace, must interact with co-workers, customers, and vendors to the same extent as employees without disabilities in comparable positions
- Provides opportunities for advancement similar-equal to those without disabilities in comparable positions

**B. Proposed policies**

Development of state policies as follows:

**Employment as required part of planning process:** OCDD, Education, and other agencies that provide ongoing services and supports to individuals with disabilities conduct an annual planning process (e.g., Education – IEP: Individualized Education Plan; OCDD – ISP: Individual Service Plan; plans of care developed through Medicaid waivers, the SPAS program, and other service programs). In addition, under Section 511 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), individuals currently earning sub-minimum wage must receive career counseling to explore competitive integrated employment on an annual basis. Develop a policy that requires as part of any annual planning process, an exploration of employment options for those of working age (16 to 64) and to offer career counseling. For those individuals not current interested in or able to work at the current time, require full documentation of reasons for non-consideration of employment, and steps that will be taken to address the issues identified. (Ohio and New Jersey developmental disability agencies have examples of such policies.)

**Requirements for informed choice regarding employment:** In connection with the previous policy, develop a policy that requires that consideration of employment align with

**Commented [BP3]:** From the Advocacy Center: I realize that none of the OAAS Waivers include employment services; however, OAAS does serve people who are interested in employment that do not know how to get involved. Can we include OAAS programs? If not, this is a missed opportunity.

**Commented [BP4]:** From the Advocacy Center: I would change this sentence to clarify who bears this responsibility. (I’m not offering the change since I don’t know what the intention would be. But I think it should say something like, “[Agency X] must develop a policy that requires [Entity Y] to explore employment options...”

guidelines of U.S. Department of Justice in terms of informed choice (which are also best practice).

Individuals and families, when initially offered the option of employment in the community, may initially express hesitancy or reluctance. Therefore, affirmative steps must be taken to ensure individuals have an opportunity to make an informed choice about working in integrated settings, including:

1. Providing information about the benefits of working in integrated settings.
2. Facilitating visits or other experiences in such settings: *situational assessment, informational interviews, job shadowing, job tours, etc.*
3. Peer-to-Peer Opportunities: Individuals with disabilities & families.
4. Identify and address any concerns or objections raised by individual or relevant decision-maker.

*Action plan should which should align with S.M.A.R.T goal concept.*

*Staff need to be well-trained to effectively engage with individuals and families regarding informed choice discussions and activities.*

#### Transition:

- Policy mandating employment planning beginning no later than age 14
- Goal of minimum of 2 employment experiences before leaving school, one of which must be paid
- Development of standards regarding employment experiences during transition that are reflective of typical teenage work experiences.
- Incorporation of transition into teacher education requirements.

#### C. Regional Coordination Structure

Develop structure of regional cross-agency entities, that meet to share expertise and resources with both an individual and systems focus.

- *Lafayette has a good regional collaboration structure in place that can serve as a model for replication.*
- *Work Pays! Is working to cooperate with LA-APSE is implementing collaborative structure at state level.*

#### D. Increased revenue and resources

- LRS Match: via state funding and other sources, make strategic effort to increase draw down of federal vocational rehabilitation funds.
  - *LRS is working on cooperative agreements*
  - *Is TOPS money an option?*

**Commented [BP5]:** Need to be clear what is a policy recommendation and what is a best practice recommendation

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**Commented [RH6]:** So, I need clarification on this proposed policy mandating one "paid" employment experience. Is this team recommending that if a student does not receive this one "paid experience then they will not graduate? What happens if the school district cannot find a "paid" experience for every student? I want to make sure we all understand that if the school district is unable to find an employer willing to offer "paid" employment, this could possibly hold up the student's graduation. Perhaps this should be reconsidered? Please don't misunderstand me. I totally understand the value of paid employment experiences, however, I also understand the challenges some of our districts face with employment issues for all people, disability or not.

**Commented [BP7]:** -Kelly with Arc of La noted: I am concerned about requiring teacher to help find paid employment experiences for people with disabilities, this is not their expertise. I am afraid that incorrect information may be given out because employment isn't something they do every day. This could actually do more harm than good and could potentially prevent that employer from hiring someone with a disability.

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**Commented [RH8]:** I'm not clear on what type of "standards" are being addressed here.

**Commented [RH9]:** This should be clarified. Transition classes are being offered in teacher prep programs. The current programs need to be modified to include a vocational component.

- Medicaid Match: Make strategic effort to increase Medicaid match to increase number of individuals able to access employment services under the Medicaid waiver opportunities
- Ticket to Work: Every individual in Louisiana on SSI and SSDI between the ages of 18 to 64 is eligible for Ticket to Work from the Social Security Administration. If an individual with a Ticket goes to work at a certain earning levels and maintains employment, a qualified entity (Employment Network) can generate revenue spread out over several years. Currently there are xx individuals eligible for Ticket in Louisiana, while only XX individuals in Louisiana who have assigned their Tickets.
- Federal systems change initiatives: ensure that Louisiana is actively pursuing various federally funded systems change efforts and that such efforts are used effectively

#### **E. Rate structures**

- Current rate structures provide disincentives for employment in the community for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities
- Need for rates that incentivize employment
  - *LSU Human Development Center has report analyzing rates*
- LRS rates were recently reformed giving providers incentives for higher quality jobs

#### **F. Leveraging current federal policy efforts and Initiatives**

##### New Restriction on Sub-Minimum Wage

- Ensure integrity of new requirements restricting use of sub-minimum wage (WIOA Section 511) including ensuring informed choice
- Clearly defined process that promotes access to competitive integrated employment
- Use annual review process and access to career counseling under Section 511 to ensure full consideration of employment options.
- Ensure availability of quality self-determination, self-advocacy, and peer mentoring opportunities for those currently in sub-minimum wage
- Ensuring development of cooperative relationships between LRS, OCDD, and Education on Section 511 implementation
  - *Note: OCDD no longer will allow for payment of sub-minimum wage as of 2019.*

##### Section 503: New requirements for federal contractors regarding employment of people with disabilities

- Developing structure for maximum leverage
- Using as a basis for similar state effort

#### **G. Public hiring**

- Hiring by federal government – Enhance awareness of Schedule A and other federal hiring initiatives; strategically work with federal employers in Louisiana on hiring

- **State as model employer** – Develop a state as model employer initiative, to serve as example for regional and local government
  - It was discussed in a GACDA Employment Committee meeting that the State of Louisiana should lead the way by setting an example through adopting State as Model Employer (SAME) Practices. This should be included in the Employment First Work Group’s recommendations. Here are some references to SAME, all of which contain information cogent to Employment First:

<http://www.ncsl.org/research/labor-and-employment/state-as-model-employer-policies.aspx>  
[https://www.nga.org/files/live/sites/NGA/files/pdf/2013/NGA\\_2013BetterBottomLineWeb.pdf](https://www.nga.org/files/live/sites/NGA/files/pdf/2013/NGA_2013BetterBottomLineWeb.pdf)  
 (this one is referenced in Item 4 below)  
<http://www.askearn.org/wp-content/uploads/docs/statemodel.pdf>

**Commented [BP10]:** From the Advocacy Center staff: I think that Advocacy Center met with LA Civil Service to discuss becoming a model employer of people with disabilities. Should we follow-up on that?

#### H. Public workforce system

**Louisiana has 16 (check number) Workforce Development boards that oversee each region’s local workforce system for all job seekers, including the Career Solutions Centers. LRS is a mandated member of each local board. Efforts should be made to ensure that disability issues are more fully addressed and incorporated within all aspects of the general workforce system including:**

- Clear standards for ensuring maximum access to Career Solutions Centers.
- Policies and practices that ensure training vendors fully welcome and accommodates individuals with disabilities.
- Engaging the business members of the Workforce Development Boards (at least have the members must be employers) regarding employment of people with disabilities.
- Developing mechanisms for engaging OCDD and Office of Behavioral Health within Workforce Development Councils in order to strategize regarding how the resources of these entities can be mutually leveraged.
- Consider combining employer outreach efforts of the general workforce systems with LRS efforts.
  - *Note: such an effort is underway in Illinois.*

#### I. Service access

- Pilot use of Career Solutions Centers (One-Stops) as access point for services – in-person and online
- Create user-friendly materials regarding employment service options and supports, and right to services
- Ensuring full awareness of resources that are available not necessarily dependent on state funding
- Need for VR SE providers to also be Medicaid providers?
- Need for individuals and families to fully understand service flow and service options

#### J. Benefits planning

- Develop plan for universal access to benefits counseling on as needed basis
- Consider tiered approach (from basic information to development of a full benefits plan by a WIPA: Work Incentive Planning and Assistance program) with both in-person and on-line access. This might include investment in DB 101 (an online tool) for Louisiana (<https://www.db101.org>)
- Consider building network of additional Community Work Incentive Counselors (CWICs) beyond the WIPA programs (training available from [VCU](#) and [Cornell](#)).

#### K. Service capacity-building

- Required staff competencies: development of expected staff competencies of employment service providers
- Louisiana needs to have clearer standing on what is knowledge based.
- Individual testing can look at overall competency. We have to do this in a way that does not do away with flexibility.
- Develop standards for annual required assessment of Career Solutions Centers (One-Stops) to be used as part of ongoing capacity-building to increase capacity to work with job seekers with disabilities
- Building service provider capacity
- Training can be over burdensome. Preference to show competency
  - Need to separate the two
- Uniform system
- Workforce Development has an obligation to develop workforce.
- Spending tax dollars to support individuals. We need money to develop competencies for providers.
- Providers should first figure out what families have the ability to do on their own with waivers and what they already have access to before sending them to LRS. Some providers are doing this, but it isn't standard across the board.

#### L. Transition

- Training for teachers on transition
  - Transition endorsement for teachers (massachusetts)
- Training for parents on transition using existing family networks
  - Include service graphic
- Need for access by parents to individuals who can provide support during transition at IEP meetings

**Commented [RH11]:** We need to clarify which areas of "transition" we are talking about. "Transition" alone is a huge topic.

**Commented [RH12]:** This could actually fall under a major "parent" topic that would include the bullet point above.



- Develop a broad-based focus by Department of Education on employment as part of transition
  - Roll-out of Jump Start program provides a possible example for similar roll-out
  - <http://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/jumpstart/jump-start-students-with-disabilities-implementation-guidance.pdf>
  - <http://www.louisianabelieves.com/courses/all-things-jump-start/students-with-disabilities>
  - <http://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/jumpstart/high-school-experiences-for-laa1-eligible-students.pdf?sfvrsn=2>
  - <http://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/jumpstart/jump-start-students-with-disabilities-implementation-guidance.pdf?sfvrsn=4>
- Planning for students on the Act 833 alternative pathway is very similar to planning for students on the traditional pathway. The key difference is the IEP team determines appropriate exit goals, credentials, and individual performance criteria for classroom and EOC assessments the student must meet in order to achieve the standard diploma requirements.
  - Baton Rouge Area Foundation contract for web-based roadmap to services
  - Pre-ETS

**Commented [RH13]:** Not quite sure I understand what this statement actually means. Can we clarify?

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**M. Transportation**

- Develop structure to engage state and regional transportation officials
- Create information materials on transportation options
- Consider engagement of national transportation technical assistance resources (Community Transportation Association of America)
- Recommendation that transportation is an huge issue and needs to have its own workgroup
- Transportation does impede people from being employed, especially in rural areas. Include links to other groups who can make recommendations focused on people with disabilities outside of the aging population.
- Create a regional taskforce and should have people from DD community.

**Commented [BP14]:** Donna W. commented: Last year, Acadiana One Stop offered transportation for students attending Technical College and working. Is it possible to utilize this service for students with disabilities and transportation to work sites?

**Commented [BP15]:** -Kelly M. commented: Do we need another task force? GACDA has a transportation and employment task force. I think that having too many different groups doing similar things could harm the initiative rather than help move forward.

Bambi response: This will not be something that the EF Workgroup will facilitate. This is a recommendation as a potential solution because many issues are local.

**N. Consider development of cross-agency and cross-disability Employment First policy that would include ongoing Employment First taskforce; possibly include language that it will be the policy of Louisiana that every effort will be made to ensure that all Louisiana citizens with disabilities are working to their maximum ability and maximum self-sufficiency.**

- Executive Order and Legislation
  - There are many examples in other states
- Look at legislative options for next year

- Suggested best option to have regional transportation taskforce and should have representation of various disability groups with various functional and access needs.

**O. Data and reporting - annual**

- Create an annual employment report card to track progress on employment across agencies (report card is premature at this time)
- Will each strategy contain a recommendation for the accountability structure for that strategy? That is, recommendation for the responsible party for each strategy, and the level of authority needed to carry out the assigned responsibilities.
- Need for good data systems
  - LRS use Aware system. Associated system is Vizio
  - Unified system; can't pull data from a matrix that doesn't exist
- Create timeline for implementation