



April 9, 2014

## Rhode Island Settlement On Employment

Descriptions like “landmark” and “first-of-its-kind” are being used to characterize this week’s [settlement agreement](#) between the United States Department of Justice and the State of Rhode Island. The agreement addresses the rights of people with developmental disabilities statewide to receive employment and daytime services in the community, rather than in segregated and facility-based programs.

Under the agreement, Rhode Island has agreed to provide:

- Supported employment placements that are individual, typical jobs in the community, that pay at least minimum wage, and that offer employment for the maximum number of hours consistent with the person’s abilities and preferences, amounting to an average of at least 20 hours per week across the target population;
- Supports for integrated non-work activities for times when people are not at work including mainstream educational, leisure or volunteer activities that use the same community centers, libraries, recreational, sports and educational facilities that are available to everyone;
- Transition services for students with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities, to start at age 14, and to include internships, job site visits and mentoring, enabling students to leave school prepared for jobs in the community at competitive wages; and
- Significant funding sustained over a ten year period that redirects funds currently used to support services in segregated settings to those that incentivize services in integrated settings.

The agreement also provides that individuals already attending segregated programs can chose to remain with a granted variance; however, to ensure informed choice, individuals first must receive a vocational assessment, a trial work experience, outreach information and benefits counseling.

Using each requirement listed above, Louisiana should design a way forward that invests in Louisiana’s people and fully implements policies, such as Employment First, that result in “equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency.” (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C.A. § 12101 et seq.)

[Read the Council’s position on Employment of People with Developmental Disabilities.](#)