



Employment of People with Developmental Disabilities

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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 Louisiana Developmental Disabilities 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 the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the new Medicaid rule on Home and Community Based Services settings, which result in "equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency."²

Recommendations:

1. Provide La. Rehabilitation Services a state match that would draw down 100% of its federal allotment.
2. Monitor the transition to the new Home- and Community-Based settings rule to ensure a systemic shift from congregate vocational/pre-vocational settings to competitive integrated individualized employment consistent with the individual's strengths and interests.



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3. Implement adequate Medicaid and Vocational Rehabilitation payment/rate structures for the provision of competitive, integrated, and individualized employment support services that meet the demand in all regions of the state.
 4. Ensure a stable workforce of qualified employment professionals who support people, including those with the most significant disabilities, obtaining and maintaining competitive integrated individualized employment through
 - Certification of Employment Support Professionals (ESPs) and
 - Training and technical assistance for supported employment providers (owners/executive staff).

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.