

NCCDD and Employment First: Why Now?

State and Federal Policy Review



State of the State: Opportunities and Challenges

- Individuals with disabilities have the highest (80%) rate of unemployment and are an untapped source of qualified candidates.
- People with disabilities contribute to diverse innovative workforce, have equal to or higher performance rates and are less likely to resign than people without disabilities.
- Employment contributes to the state economy and can reduce individual poverty and dependency on systems.
- Services have shifted away from employment and job supports to non-work services that do not assist participants in accessing a productive career path and meaningful work in the community.
- A total of 26 states have legislation, a formal policy directive or other official state mandate addressing employment as a priority outcome.

Employment First
Employment in the general workforce is the first and preferred outcome in the provision of publicly funded services for all citizens with disabilities regardless of level of disability, in a job of their choosing with supports and accommodations provided as necessary to achieve and maintain employment.

Current and Past DD Council Investments

- **North Carolina State Employment Leadership Network (SELN)** - builds connections within and across states to learn from experiences of other service systems, share costs, use data and maximize resources .
- **Stakeholder Engagement Group (SEG)** - is the only cross-disability group comprised entirely of individuals receiving services and family members who identified integrated employment and asset development in their top five desired system outcomes.
- **The Alliance for Full Participation** - is a partnership of 15 national organizations promoting the full inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in employment.
- **North Carolina Employment First Steering Committee** - is a statewide workgroup formed in 2011 to strengthen collaboration and action to achieve employment goals. *Defined NC Employment First Statement of Principles.
- **Project SEARCH** - Increases competitive employment for persons with I/DD through the internship model.
- **Reaching the Summit of Success** - Develops a strategic plan of goals, timelines and strategies to enable transition to postsecondary educational opportunities and integrated work environments.

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- **Learning and Earning After High School** - Raises expectations, change attitudes and provide transition services and resources for students with I/DD, even with those with the most complex disabilities.

State Level Employment Initiatives:

- **Employment First Principles** - Supported by 50 statewide organizations and individuals
- **NC Business Leadership Network** - Business-to-business support to source, hire and promote people with disabilities
- **Governor McCrory Executive Order 55 Equal Opportunity Employment (June 30, 2014)** - A positive approach for equal employment opportunity without regard to disability

Federal Level Employment Initiatives:

- **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)** - Reauthorized to promote transition, integrated workplaces and competitive wages
- **Executive Order 13548** - To make the federal government a model employer of persons with disabilities
- **Changes to Section 503 of Rehabilitation Act** - To set a federal contractor workforce goal of 7% employment of persons with disabilities
- **National Governor's Association** - Provides policy options for governors and decision makers to employ persons with disabilities
- **Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS)** - New rules for individuals to seek employment and work in competitive integrated settings and control personal resources

ACTION NEEDED:

State level policy directive raise expectations and increase employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities



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Past and Currently Funded Grant Initiatives on Employment

The **State Employment Leadership Network (SELN)** is a cross-state cooperative of state and developmental disability agencies that are committed to improving employment outcomes for adolescents and adults with developmental disabilities. State Employment Leadership Network membership promotes new connections within and across states to establish effective collaborative relationships among states, learn from their experiences of other service systems, share costs, use data and maximize resources.

Stakeholder Engagement Group (SEG) A unique cross-disability group comprised entirely of individuals receiving services and family members. The SEG worked for six months to reach consensus on outcomes - "WHAT" is needed in the long-term support system, rather than "HOW" to get there in terms of administration. Outcomes important in a person's life include: 1) integrated employment; 2) asset development; 3) inclusive living; 4) no waiting lists; and 5) an accountable system. Stakeholders also identified 13 common areas of the long term services and support system and their expectations for each.

The Alliance for Full Participation - A partnership of fifteen national organizations to promote the full inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in employment. The primary goal of the Alliance for Full Participation (AFP) is to double the employment rate for individuals with I/DD. A North Carolina state team was created to focus on Employment First. The result was the development of a state vision supported by over 50 state and local organizations and individuals who agree to work towards the goals of employment first.

North Carolina Employment First Steering Committee - A statewide workgroup formed in 2011 with more than 30 members across disability groups to develop the future of employment services in NC, strengthen the broad-based collaborative effort between the state divisions, advocates, organizations, stakeholders, consumers and families and be a central group for ideas, issues, and initiatives on employment.

Project SEARCH - is a competitive employment for persons with I/DD through the internship model. Majority of the interns reach employment outcomes and make significant gains in other life skill areas including confidence and motivation. Students are involved in job development under the direction of the community rehabilitation program after the internship portion of the program has concluded. Each program has a Steering Committee with representation from all the partner organizations who work through the development phase and continues during implementation for problem solving and continuous improvement with the ultimate goal of achieving employment for each student intern. The collaboration that forms around Project SEARCH has led to systems-change efforts on a statewide level.

Reaching the Summit of Success (UMass ICI) - Students with I/DD share experiences and interactions with other students within the context of a typical college environment, integrated with access to the activities and services a college provides its students. The goal of this project is to develop a Transition/Employment First strategic plan to include goals, objectives, timelines and implementation strategies targeted for policy makers, funding agencies, teachers and service providers to enable a transition to postsecondary educational opportunities and integrated work environments.

Learning and Earning After High School: The Role of Transition Services in Raising Expectations and Attitudes for Students with Intellectual Disabilities - This initiative provides transition services and resources for students with I/DD, even with those with the most complex disabilities. This begins in middle school through high school. This initiative involves collaboration with Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to provide technical assistance at the state and Local Education Agency (LEA) levels. The result will be policy change recommendations to increase successful transitions into employment for students with I/DD.



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North Carolina State and Federal Policy Review

North Carolina Employment Policies:

North Carolina Business Leadership Network - A business-to-business network, NCBLN supports the business community with information and resources to: source, hire and promote people with disabilities; to do business with organizations owned and operated by people with disabilities; and to market their products and services in an accessible manner to people with disabilities across the State of North Carolina.

Governor Pat McCrory Executive Order 55 Equal Opportunity Employment

(June 30, 2014) - The executive order confirms North Carolina's commitment to: 1) providing equal employment opportunities for employment without regard to race, religion, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, genetic information; 2) recognize that effective and efficient government requires the talents, skills, and abilities of all available human resources; 3) acknowledge the need for a diverse workforce; 4) endorse a positive approach to equal employment; 5) support Human Resources practices of state government that are nondiscriminatory and promote confidence in the fairness and integrity of government; and 6) the fairness in the State work environment and that employees should be valued for their individual strengths and encouraged to achieve their fullest potential.

Federal Employment Policies:

Reauthorization of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) - Requires states to develop strategies to support the use of career pathways for the purpose of providing individuals, including low-skilled adults, youth and individuals with barriers to employment (including individuals with disabilities), with workforce investment activities, education, and supportive services to enter or retain employment. Bills provides a 15% set-aside for the Governor to fund state-led job training initiatives.

President's Executive Order 13548 - The President issued an Executive Order to make the federal government a model employer of persons with disabilities. The Order requires agencies to create hiring plans and holds agencies accountable for their hiring practices.

New Regulations for Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act - The Department of Labor (DoL) proposed a new rule to strengthen requirements outlined in Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that would require federal contractors and subcontractors to set a goal of having 7% of their workforces be people with disabilities. The regulatory changes detail specific actions contractors must take in the areas of recruitment, training, record keeping, and policy dissemination- similar to those that have been required to promote workplace equality for women and minorities.

National Governor's Association Focus on Employment - Supported by Governor Jack Markell, (Delaware) and Governor Scott Walker (Wisconsin), the A Better Bottom Line: Employing People with Disabilities initiative provides governors and other state policymakers with better policy options to assess the environment in their state and strategies designed to support this population. A major emphasis is on people who have significant I/DD and may require supports like job coaches and personal attendants in order to live and work in the community. Governors, businesses, disability leaders and other thought leaders convene throughout the year to share ideas that support this population.

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS)

- New changes to CMS rules require that individuals receiving HCBS have opportunities to seek employment and work in competitive integrated settings, engage in community life, and control personal resources.

