

# 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.

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**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.

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### 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

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### ACTION NEEDED:

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

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