HEALTH CARE AUTHORITY

EMPLOYMENT FIRST POLICY UPDATES
ACQ Policy And Quality Subcommittee

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MATERIALS IN MEETING AGENDA

Review these materials to guide the discussion

- Employment First Policy Draft
- State Employment Leadership Network (SELN) Employment Framework One-Pager

OVERVIEW

What is Employment First?
What is Competitive Integrated Employment?
Why People Want Competitive Integrated Employment?
Reasons for Updates to the Employment First Policy
What Framework DDSD Uses for Employment First Policy
What the Policy is Designed to Achieve
Procedural Expectations Detailed in the Policy
Questions/Comments
Links and Resources

WHAT IS EMPLOYMENT FIRST?

- Employment First is a national systems-change framework centered on the premise that all individuals, including those with the most significant disabilities, are capable of full participation in Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) and community life.
- Employment First starts with a presumption that a person with a disability can work.
- DDSD supports Employment First by offering home and community-based services (HCBS) waiver programs that support employment in the general workforce as the first and preferred option for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

WHAT IS COMPETITIVE INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT (CIE)?

- The national Employment First movement states the goal is competitive integrated employment (CIE).

- Competitive integrated employment has four primary components:
  - Competitive earnings

    Paid at least minimum wage and the same wage as workers without disability performing similar work
  - Access to benefits

    Has the same access to employer-provided benefits such as health insurance and paid time off
  - Integrated setting

    Interacts routinely with non-disabled coworkers and the public
  - Opportunity for advancement

    Access to promotions and advancement in skills, pay, and job responsibilities

WHY PEOPLE WANT COMPETITIVE INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT?

- There are many benefits of having a job and working for the people on the home and community based services (HCBS) waivers.
- These include but are not limited to
  - Money to spend or save
  - Growth and skill development
  - Increased self-determination
  - Healthcare, retirement, and sick leave benefits

REASONS FOR UPDATES TO THE EMPLOYMENT FIRST POLICY

- The policy was due for routine review and update cycle since 2021
- The previous Employment First Policy was shaped by the Jackson litigation
- Earlier policy language described practices specific to the Developmental Disabilities Waiver; those practices are integrated into existing standards
- The updates are necessary to ensure alignment with national best practices emphasizing competitive integrated employment as an expected outcome of high-quality Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Waiver programs – *not a priority service*
- HCBS waiver programs now serve a younger population, making previous definitions of working-age adult outdated

WHAT FRAMEWORK DDSD USES FOR EMPLOYMENT FIRST

- DDSD uses the State Employment Leadership Network (SELN) Employment Framework for Higher Performing States (Hall et all 2007)
- This framework is a research-based model designed to strengthen state employment systems and partnerships
- DDSD adopted this model as a roadmap to improve integrated employment outcomes
- The framework ensures that current policy and practice are based on a proven, research-based systemic design

WHAT THE POLICY IS DESIGNED TO ACHIEVE

- Formally establishes the Developmental Disabilities Supports Division (DDSD)'s commitment to Employment First; beginning with the presumption all people in DDSD's programs are capable of employment
- Provides a guide and framework for DDSD operations to help people reach competitive integrated employment outcomes
- Expands focus of employment support services to include those in the general working age as defined by labor laws
- In short, DDSD's Employment First Authorization and Implementation Policy is designed to ensure people have *access* to employment outcomes with the help of specialized services and coordination with other state agencies.

PROCEDURAL EXPECTATIONS DETAILED IN THE POLICY

Support for Employment First and CIE as an expected outcome will occur throughout DDSD programs

1. DDSD will integrate Employment First systemically in reimbursement mechanisms, person-centered planning, monitoring and data collection, provider capacity, and public awareness campaigns.
2. DDSD commits to maintaining specialized services designed to support a person with long-term services at their job site, as needed is a key procedural expectation
3. DDSD bureaus will implement Employment First throughout service standards, regulatory guidelines, and practices across all elements of the HCBS waiver programs.
4. The State Community Inclusion and Employment Lead is to serve as an internal and external subject-matter expert to support the integration of best practices. This includes support for regional offices, partnerships with stakeholder groups, and respond promptly to employment-related technical assistance requests.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

- Any areas of the purpose or procedures that need further clarification?
- Best ways to share Employment First updates with the community?
- Other general suggestions?

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LINKS TO SOURCES

- Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) per U.S. DOL
  - Defines CIE and provides federal-level detail
- State Employment Leadership Network (SELN) Employment Framework for Higher Performing States
  - Research-based framework that informs new Employment First Policy
- Working Age Regulations per NM DWS
  - This specifies 14+ years of working age