

DDS's Employment Initiatives

Current initiatives include:

- ❖ Promoting Employment First
- ❖ Capacity-building through:
 - Training of trainers
 - Establishing an Employment First Community of Practice
 - Re-establishing an APSE Chapter in DC
 - Supporting employment in the Money Follows the Person (MFP) Demonstration
 - Providing training, technical assistance, and support for business planning for agencies that want to assist people in moving into employment
- ❖ Creation of a Benefits Planning and Work Incentives Network
- ❖ Creation of an Administrative Employment Network (EN) at DDS so that agencies can accept Tickets to Work without having to become an EN and that can support current ENs in tracking milestones

Our Employment First Vision: DC expects that all people of working age will work and earn the prevailing wage, in the career path they choose.

What is "Employment First?"

Although there is no single definition of Employment First, the State Employment Leadership Network (SELN, 2011) describes it as integrated individual employment that is offered and explored before other service options, in a system where community employment is supported as a priority outcome in policy, practice, and quality management.

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This vision statement acknowledges that:

- All people want to be valued, to contribute, to be engaged, and to have a reason to get up in the morning
- Work is important and valued for all adults
- We need to engage in joint learning experiences in which people explore new activities, places, people – and where people jointly reflect on what they discover
- We need to build on those things that seem to be meaningful and engaging in ways that might lead to employment
- We need to continually identify what people can contribute and the ways they can make their contribution, focusing on someone’s capacity rather than their limitations
- Identify places where that capacity might be welcomed and assist with making the connection and providing assistance as needed, adjusting that assistance as situations change
- We need to intentionally maximize community connections for/with individuals
- Set-backs and unsuccessful tries at employment or employment-related activities are opportunities for growth and learning

What are best practices for supporting employment outcomes?

- ❖ Real person-centered, person-directed planning
- ❖ Engaging in "discovery" to assist in identifying possibilities
- ❖ Creating and supporting support networks, networking, peer supports and mentoring
- ❖ Providing benefits analysis and planning
- ❖ Engaging in an on-going dialogue to reflect on and explore possibilities

(SELN, 2011; APSE, 2011)

Employment First Resource List

Revised January 2012

General Information

1. APSE PUBLICATIONS

- a. **APSE Employment First Statement:** Statement outlining principles of Employment First - www.apse.org/docs/APSE%20Employment%20First%20Statement%20-%20FINAL-1.pdf
- b. **APSE Employment First White Paper:** “Establishing a National Employment First Agenda” paper from APSE - www.apse.org/docs/Employment%20First%20Paper%20609%5B1%5D.pdf
- c. **APSE Connections-Employment First:** Article from JTPR APSE Connections advocating a national Employment First agenda

2. **Alliance for Full Participation:** The Alliance for Full Participation (AFP) site contains a number of Employment First documents and updates from various states on their Employment First activities - www.allianceforfullparticipation.org

3. **Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Article – *Employment First: A Beginning Not an End*:** August 2011 Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities journal article summarizing the principles of Employment First - <http://aaidjournals.org/toc/mere/current>

4. **NASDDDS Article – *Workers First*:** Article from June 2009 Community Services Reporter, published by National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services providing an overview of Employment First efforts - [www.nasddds.org/pdf/WorkersFirst\(Moseley\).pdf](http://www.nasddds.org/pdf/WorkersFirst(Moseley).pdf)

5. **NTAR Leadership Center Blog:** Blog post on Employment First by Wendy Parent, Kansas University - <http://ntarseedingchange.blogspot.com/2010/03/employment-first.html>

6. **ODEP-USDOL Employment First Memo:** January 2009 memo from the US Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy stressing importance of Employment First - www.dol.gov/odep/events/employmentfirst/employmentfirst.htm

7. SELN PUBLICATIONS

- a. **SELN Employment First Publication:** “Q & A’s on State Employment First Policies”: publication from the State Employment Leadership Network (SELN) providing an overview of Employment First, and specific efforts in Colorado, Florida, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Washington State, Georgia, Minnesota, and Indiana - http://selnmembers.org/images/stories/site_documents/dmr%20request%20employment%20policy%203-08rev.pdf
- b. **SELN Maintaining Focus:** Article from March 2009 Community Services Reporter, published by National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services “Maintaining a Focus on Employment in Tough Economic Times” – intended to encourage state systems to maintain focus on employment despite current economic conditions - www.nasddds.org/pdf/MaintainingFocusOnEmployment.pdf



State Specific Information

1. **ARKANSAS** – Governor’s Executive Order: Executive order establishing the Arkansas Employment First Initiative - www.arkdisabilityrights.org/doc/eo_1017.pdf
2. **CALIFORNIA**
 - a. **CA Employment First Legislation Overview:** Overview of AB 287 from California State Council on Developmental Disabilities - www.scdd.ca.gov/Legislation/AB287/Learnabout-AB287_9-09combined.pdf
 - b. **CA Legislation (passed):** Text of AB 287, California’s Legislation on Employment First, signed into law in October 2009 - www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/09-10/bill/asm/ab_0251-0300/ab_287_bill_20091011_chaptered.pdf
 - c. **Committee on Employment First:** Materials from State Council on Developmental Disabilities Committee on Employment First - www.scdd.ca.gov/Committee/EmploymentFirstCommittee.htm
3. **CONNECTICUT - DDS Newsletter:** Connecticut Department of Developmental Services self-determination newsletter discussing state’s Employment First efforts - www.ct.gov/dds/lib/dds/self_determination/newsletters/sd_newsletter_june_2008.pdf
4. **DELAWARE**
 - a. **Delaware Employment First Statement:** Statement from Delaware Division of Developmental Disabilities Services on Employment First - www.dhss.delaware.gov/ddds/emp_first.html
 - b. **Delaware DDDS Newsletter:** Newsletter from Delaware DDDS with further details on Employment First - www.dhss.delaware.gov/ddds/files/learn_curve_june09.pdf
5. **FLORIDA Developmental Disabilities Council Employment First Statement:** Statement from Florida DD Council in support of Employment First - <http://www.fddc.org/about/employment>
6. **GEORGIA – Employment First Georgia Website** - www.employmentfirstgeorgia.org
7. **INDIANA**
 - a. **IN APSE Employment First 2009 follow-up:** Summary of follow-up items from 2005 Indiana Employment First Summit - www.inapse.org/styles/inapse/defiles/summit%20update%2012-15-09.pdf
 - B. **IN Employment First Fact Sheet:** Fact sheet summarizing 2005 Indiana Employment First Summit - www.apse.org/docs/IN_APSE_empl_first_fact_sheet.pdf
8. **IOWA**
 - a. **Iowa’s Employment First Initiative: A Call for Change of Historical Proportion:** Fall 2009 white paper outlining vision for an Employment First initiative in Iowa - www.allianceforfullparticipation.org/component/content/article/196-iowas-employment-first-initiative
 - b. **Iowa Employment First Initiative Summary Points:** One-page summary of rationale for Employment First in Iowa
 - c. **Iowa Employment First Initiative Summary of Findings:** October 2011 report - <http://www.iowa-apse.org/summit/findings2.pdf>
9. **KANSAS**
 - a. **Kansas Employment First Legislation (passed):** Text of Kansas House Bill 2336 that



establishes a statewide policy of employment first for all people with disabilities. Bill was signed into law in May 2011. -

www.kslegislature.org/li/b2011_12/year1/measures/documents/hb2336_enrolled.pdf

- b. **Kansas Employment First Summary:** Summary of Kansas Employment First efforts and link to materials - www.workinghealthy.org/employmentfirst.html
- c. **Kansas Employment First Flyer:** Flyer promoting Employment First in Kansas - www.workinghealthy.org/downloads/EmploymentFirstFlyer.pdf
- d. **Kansas Report – Employment First Workgroup:** May 2009 from Employment First Initiative Work Group - www.apse.org/docs/aaaemployment_first_work_group_initial_report.pdf
- e. **Kansas Executive Orders:** Executive orders from the Governor of Kansas issued 8/26/10, related to employment of individuals in the community

10. LOUISIANA – Employment First policy statement from the Louisiana Office of Citizens with Developmental Disabilities -

http://new.dhh.louisiana.gov/assets/docs/OCDD/Other/Employment_First_MEMO.pdf

11. MARYLAND

- a. **Development Disabilities Administration Position Statement on Employment Services** - http://dhmh.maryland.gov/dda_md/Training/DDA91809.pdf
- b. **Employment First Overview: Overview of Maryland's Development Disabilities Administration Employment First initiative** - www.reinventingquality.org/docs/ColleenGauruder-08.pdf

12. MASSACHUSETTS

- a. **MA Employment First Policy:** 2010 policy issuance from Massachusetts Department of Developmental Disability Services
- b. **MA DDS RFQ:** Excerpts from 2009 Massachusetts Department of Developmental Disability Services service provider solicitation, highlighting a shift in Massachusetts to an Employment First Policy

13. MINNESOTA

- a. **MN Employment First Summit Report I: Report of 2007 MN Employment First Summit - A Manifesto on the Employment of Minnesotans with Disabilities in the Integrated, Competitive Workforce** - www.mnapse.org/Employment-First-Report.pdf
- b. **MN Employment First Summit Report II: Report of 2008 MN Employment First Summit - A Progress Report on Employment First Performance in Minnesota** - www.mnapse.org/Employment-First-Report-Summit-2.pdf

Minnesota Employment First Web Links:

- **Minnesota Employment Policy Initiative Website:** www.mn-epi.org/main
- **Minnesota Employment Training & Technical Assistance Website:** www.mntat.org/main
- **Minnesota Employment First Blogs:** <http://employment1st.blogspot.com>
www.mn-epi.blogspot.com

- 14. MISSOURI:** January 2011 Employment First Policy, issued by the Missouri Department of Mental Health, Division of Developmental Disabilities – www.dmh.mo.gov/docs/dd/employmentpolicyfinal.doc



15. **NEW MEXICO Webinar:** “Making Employment First a Reality in NM” webinar and text - www.health.state.nm.us/DDSD/meaningfullife/EmployFirstRsrcs.htm
16. **NEW YORK**
- a. **State Office for People with Development Disabilities (OPWDD) Center for Employment Excellence Website** - www.opwdd.ny.gov/cee/index.jsp
 - b. **OPWDD 2011 Interim Report on State Plan** – February 2011 interim report on 2010-2014 OPWDD Statewide Comprehensive Plan, that includes summary of efforts on Employment First (pp. 6-7) - www.opwdd.ny.gov/507plan/images/Interim_5_07_Rpt_Final_2_15.pdf
 - c. **OMRDD 2010 Interim Report on State Plan** – February 2010 interim report on 2009-2013 OMRDD Statewide Comprehensive, that includes summary of efforts on Employment First (p. 5) - www.opwdd.ny.gov/507plan/images/OMR_Interim_Report_2_10_Final.pdf
17. **NORTH CAROLINA APSE Article:** Article from North Carolina APSE calling for an Employment First Policy - www.ncapse.org/WhitePaperEmploymentFirst.pdf
18. **NORTH DAKOTA Employment First Summit Report:** October 2011 report summarizing the findings and plan of action resulting from the state’s Employment First summit in October 2010 - www.independencecil.org/News.aspx?ID=22
19. **OHIO SELF Waiver Employment First Policy:** Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities Self Empowered Life (SELF) Waiver, effective July 1, 2012, that institutes Employment First Policy. Documents available include waiver (Employment First reference on p. 76), Employment First Form, and PowerPoint providing overview of SELF Waiver - [http://odmrdd.state.oh.us/medicaid/Pages/Self-Empowered-Life-Funding-\(SELF\)-waiver-.aspx](http://odmrdd.state.oh.us/medicaid/Pages/Self-Empowered-Life-Funding-(SELF)-waiver-.aspx)
20. **OKLAHOMA DDS Employment Policy:** Oklahoma Developmental Disabilities Services employment policy, stating that the optimal goal of waiver services is full-time employment in the community - www.okdhs.org/library/policy/oac317/040/07/0001000.htm
21. **OREGON**
- a. **Oregon DDS Employment First Initiative:** Includes information on Oregon’s Employment First Initiative with link to Oregon Office of Developmental Disability Services Policy on employment for working age individuals - www.dhs.state.or.us/dd/supp_emp/initiative.html
 - b. **Article on Employment First:** Opinion piece published in Oregon newspapers - <http://theportlander.com/2010/03/16/employment-first-for-all-oregonians>
 - c. **Oregon Employment First Plan:** Plan developed for implementation of Employment First in Oregon - http://www.sidestreetshop.com/stores/195/libraries/articulate/wise_or_ef_recommendations_paper_1_28_2011_final_w_o_copyright_notice_1.pdf
22. **PENNSYLVANIA**
- a. **PA Employment Legislation:** State legislation that mandates access to community employment - www.pacode.com/secure/data/055/chapter6000/subchapKtoc.html
 - b. **PA Employment Policy - General:** 2005 policy document from Pennsylvania Office of Mental Retardation on community employment as a priority - www.temple.edu/thetrainingpartnership/resources/mrBulletins/misc/00-05-07.pdf
 - c. **PA Employment Policy – ICFs/MR:** 2005 policy document from Pennsylvania Department of Public welfare on supporting community employment for individuals living in Intermediate Care Facilities for Individuals with Mental Retardation, indicating community employment as a priority



without regard to level of disability -

www.temple.edu/thetrainingpartnership/resources/mrBulletins/icf/00-06-08.pdf

- d. **PA Employment Policy – 1990:** 1990 policy document from Pennsylvania Office of Mental Retardation directing that community employment be considered as a service option before less integrated, more restricted options -
www.temple.edu/thetrainingpartnership/resources/mrBulletins/misc/6000-90-06.pdf

23. RHODE ISLAND

- a. **Employment First Summit Report** - Report of Employment First Summit held in March 2010 -
www.rhodesoindependence.org/docs/final%20summary%20report.pdf
- b. **Employment First Policy White Paper** – Paper discussing options for Employment First legislation in Rhode Island -
www.rhodesoindependence.org/docs/Policy%20White%20Paper%20-%20Final%20%20-%202011.23.10.pdf
- c. **1115 Waiver Group Report** – September 2009 paper which contains initial proposal for Rhode Island to be an Employment First state -
www.ohhs.ri.gov/documents/documents09/Employmt_Wkgp_recs.pdf

24. TENNESSEE

- a. **ARC of TN Statement** – Statement from ARC of Tennessee in support of Employment First -
www.thearctn.org/Employment.php
- b. **TN DMRS Employment First Statement:** 2003 statement of support from the Tennessee Division of Mental Retardation Services in support of Tennessee’s Employment First! Initiative -
www.onestops.info/resources/TN_CEP/Employment_First_Final.doc
- c. **TN DMRS Newsletter 07:** 2007 Tennessee Division of Mental Retardation Services newsletter containing article on employment first – pp. 3-5 -
http://tennessee.gov/dids/newsroom/publications/personally_speaking/march_07.pdf
- d. **TN DMRS Provider Manual Excerpt:** Excerpt from 2005 Tennessee Division of Mental Retardation Services provider manual regarding Employment First, and requirements for vocational evaluation (situational assessment) every three years. To find this excerpt, go to the full manual and search for “Employment First” –
www.state.tn.us/dids/provider_agencies/Provider%20Manual.pdf
- e. **TN Employment First Overview:** Publication from the Institute for Community Inclusion providing an overview of Tennessee’s Employment First policy -
www.communityinclusion.org/article.php?article_id=202

25. **TEXAS – Legislation (proposed):** Text of Texas House Bill 785 requiring that employment services be structured to ensure employment of people with disabilities in integrated settings. Current status (7/11) is that bill has not been acted on. - www.statesurge.com/bills/hb-785-texas-452277

26. **UTAH – Legislation (passed):** Text of Utah House Bill, that requires that employment be the first priority for individuals with disabilities receiving publicly funded supports. Bill was signed into law in March 2011. - <http://le.utah.gov/~2011/bills/hbillenr/hb0240.htm>

27. **VIRGINIA – Legislation (proposed):** Text of Virginia House Bill HJ 633 to develop an Employment First Initiative - <http://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?111+ful+HJ633+pdf>

28. WASHINGTON STATE

- a. **ICI Pub-Washington WAAP:** Publication from the Institute for Community Inclusion providing an overview of Washington’s Working Age Adult Policy -



www.communityinclusion.org/article.php?article_id=222

- b. **Washington State Policy:** Washington Division of Developmental Disabilities Working Age Adult Policy - www.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/adsa/ddd/policies/policy4.11.pdf

29. WISCONSIN

- a. **WI Employment First Flyer:** Wisconsin APSE Employment First flyer
- b. **WI Employment First Plan 2010:** Wisconsin Employment First plan developed in 2010
- c. **WI Employment First Rationale-FAQ:** Wisconsin APSE rationale and frequently asked questions regarding Employment First - www.wiapse.org/WI%20Employment%20First%20Initiative%20Rationale.doc
- d. **WI Mission and Values Statement:** Wisconsin Employment First Mission and Values Statement, asking individuals to commit to Employment First
- e. **Employment First Wisconsin Booklet:** Report from Employment First Wisconsin - www.wiapse.org/documents%20folder/EmploymentFirstBooklet.pdf
- f. **WI Managed Care and Employment Task Force:** Recommendation that managed care long-term care system should support integrated employment as the preferred employment option (pp.6-8) - www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/wipathways/pdf/MCETF%20Final%20Report.pdf

International Efforts

Australia – Website of Employment First Australia

<http://employmentfirst.org.au>

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Copies of items that are not available on the worldwide web can be obtained by sending an email to david.hoff@umb.edu; phone: 617-287-4308*



www.seln.org

SELN Working Document

The State Employment Leadership Network (SELN) is a cross-state cooperative venture of state MR/DD agencies that are committed to improving employment outcomes for adolescents and adults with developmental disabilities. Working documents contain information collected in response to state requests, and federal, state and local initiatives of interest to the SELN membership. They are intended to share work in progress but may not be a comprehensive analysis or compilation. Working documents are updated over time as information changes.



Social Security Benefits and Employment: What's New for 2012?



Did you know that:

- ❖ A Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipient can make between \$25,000 and \$68,000 per year without losing Medicaid coverage?
- ❖ A person receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits has nine trial work months during which full benefit checks come, regardless of income earned?
- ❖ An SSI or SSDI recipient can maintain much of their benefit amount by deducting the costs of disability-related expenses from their gross monthly income?
- ❖ Many young adults can keep some or all of their annual work earnings (up to \$6840) without losing money from their SSI check?

Concern about losing benefits keeps many people with disabilities from seeking gainful employment. It is crucial to share accurate information about Social Security work incentives with job seekers and their families. Check out these resources to learn more:

Social Security Administration (SSA) website:

www.socialsecurity.gov/disabilityresearch/wi/generalinfo.htm

www.socialsecurity.gov/work/

Going To Work: A Guide to Social Security Benefits & Employment for Young People with Disabilities

www.communityinclusion.org/article.php?article_id=211

The rules for SSA work incentives are based on various financial limits, which can change from year to year to keep up with the cost of living. Here is what's important to know for 2012:

Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA):

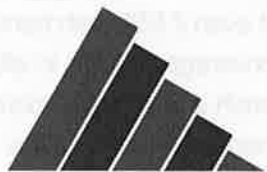
Based on the increase in the Consumer Price Index from the third quarter of 2008 through the third quarter of 2011, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) beneficiaries will receive a 3.6 percent COLA for 2012.

Other important updates:

- ❖ The Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) amount for individuals with disabilities other than blindness has increased from \$1000/month to \$1010.
- ❖ The SGA amount for individuals who are blind has increased from \$1640/month to \$1690.
- ❖ The monthly earnings amount used to determine if a month counts for a Trial Work Period remains the same at \$720.
- ❖ The income amount that will have no effect on benefits for SSI beneficiaries who are students (Student Earned Income Exclusion) has increased from \$1640/month to \$1700. The yearly maximum amount has increased from \$6600 to \$6840.
- ❖ The 1619b State Threshold Amount allows SSI recipients to continue receiving health care / medical insurance coverage when their work wages are too high to receive cash benefits. This means that even if SSI cash benefits are eliminated, Medicaid coverage remains in effect until annual earnings reach a threshold amount (see the state-by-state chart on the other side).
Note that four states (California, Iowa, Massachusetts, and Nevada) have a separate threshold for SSI recipients who are blind.

State Threshold Amounts for SSI Beneficiaries

| STATE | THRESHOLD | MISSOURI | 33,175 |
|---------------|--------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| ALABAMA | 25,253 | MONTANA | 29,752 |
| ALASKA | 54,352 | NEBRASKA | 36,651 |
| ARIZONA | 36,921 | NEVADA | 30,346 32,969 (Blind) |
| ARKANSAS | 29,587 | NEW HAMPSHIRE | 42,320 |
| CALIFORNIA | 36,423 37,743 (Blind) | NEW JERSEY | 33,751 |
| COLORADO | 33,982 | NEW MEXICO | 33,098 |
| CONNECTICUT | 68,132 | NEW YORK | 46,318 |
| DELAWARE | 39,015 | NORTH CAROLINA | 34,318 |
| D.C. | 44,857 | NORTH DAKOTA | 38,564 |
| FLORIDA | 30,259 | OHIO | 34,339 |
| GEORGIA | 28,347 | OKLAHOMA | 27,521 |
| HAWAII | 35,149 | OREGON | 32,440 |
| IDAHO | 39,775 | PENNSYLVANIA | 30,953 |
| ILLINOIS | 27,435 | RHODE ISLAND | 35,894 |
| INDIANA | 35,280 | SOUTH CAROLINA | 30,018 |
| IOWA | 31,066 31,594 (Blind) | SOUTH DAKOTA | 34,014 |
| KANSAS | 35,225 | TENNESSEE | 31,464 |
| KENTUCKY | 28,086 | TEXAS | 31,174 |
| LOUISIANA | 30,157 | UTAH | 29,889 |
| MAINE | 33,919 | VERMONT | 37,403 |
| MARYLAND | 39,926 | VIRGINIA | 34,727 |
| MASSACHUSETTS | 37,685 38,187 (Blind) | WASHINGTON | 28,802 |
| MICHIGAN | 29,919 | WEST VIRGINIA | 28,892 |
| MINNESOTA | 50,846 | WISCONSIN | 32,044 |
| MISSISSIPPI | 26,889 | WYOMING | 35,896 |
| | | NO. MARIANA ISL. | 17,772 |



State Employment Leadership Network

www.seln.org

The State Employment Leadership Network is a network of 20 state intellectual and developmental disability agencies working together to improve employment outcomes for individuals. The SELN is a joint program of the Institute for Community Inclusion at UMass Boston and the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services.



NASDDDS