



of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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Sign-On Agreement for the Wisconsin Employment First Coalition

As a member, I/we agree to these goals/positions.

The intention of the Wisconsin Employment First Coalition is to partner with people with disabilities, other stakeholders, businesses and the public to increase awareness of the need to provide integrated employment opportunities here in Wisconsin.

Survival Coalition supports integrated employment as the presumed outcome for people with disabilities. We believe that everyone can and should work in integrated jobs. Supporting this goal is cost-effective for Medicaid. It costs less per hour worked than alternative services and can reduce Medicaid costs by enhancing health, independent living skills, and the availability of natural supports.

Employment is an integral part of everyday life. It is a valued activity for individuals and society. All citizens should have the opportunity to earn income, to achieve greater stability and financial security. Employment helps people achieve independence, economic self-sufficiency and better health. Employment also gives people a sense of purpose, dignity and self-esteem. To address this critical issue, advocates in Wisconsin are advancing an Employment First Initiative.

Our Employment First effort is intended to ensure that all Wisconsin citizens with disabilities who want to work in their communities are given the opportunity to do so. Other states, including Minnesota, Indiana, Tennessee, have launched successful Employment First campaigns to expand public support and drive local and state policy in ways that further support the outcome of integrated employment for all citizens, regardless of disability.

ISSUE:

The latest state-by-state data* comparing the participation in day and employment services by individuals served by state developmental disabilities agencies (Department of Health Services in Wisconsin) shows that only 18% of Wisconsinites served were in integrated employment while 52% were engaged in facility-based work. Other individuals were served in non-work programs. Nationally, the figures were 20% and 27%, respectively. There is great room for improvement in integrated employment outcomes.

*Source: State Data: The National Report on Employment Services and Outcomes, Institute for Community Inclusion (UCEDD), University of Massachusetts Boston, Winter 2011.

DEFINITIONS:

Employment refers to working for a competitive wage in a community-based job (i.e., a job that is not based in a community rehabilitation facility) at 20 hours a week or more. The employment must be in a work setting where, to the greatest extent possible, the employment typically involves interaction with co-workers and business associates, who do not have disabilities and/or the public. Integrated employment includes employment located in community business, self-employment and ownership of micro-enterprises.

Competitive Wage means payment for work that is generally equivalent to the payment made to others performing similar work. Competitive work does not mean commensurate wage or special minimum wage (sub minimum wage). (Definition taken from the 2008 Wisconsin Managed Care and Employment Task Force Report.)

Employment First refers to the affirmation in state and federal public policies, legislative statutes, regulation and operational procedures that “employment in integrated settings at minimum wage or higher with commensurate benefits” is a priority objective and preferred outcome of publicly funded services provided to citizens with disabilities, regardless of level of disability. It is based upon a core set of principles and practices that promote informed choice on employment options.

GOAL:

- People with disabilities will be employed in integrated jobs of their choosing in the community.
- Youth goal: Increase the number of youth graduating from high school with competitive employment and have the supports needed to maintain their job.
- Increase the number of work centers transitioning to provide the majority of their supports to competitive employment supports.
- Increase the number of people accessing benefits counseling on maintaining jobs in the community.

STATEWIDE ACTION STEPS:

- DHS and DWD ensure that all Long Term Care organizations, DVR staff and service providers are working together for better employment outcomes.
- Make sure that all individuals with disabilities who want to work have information about assistance available to overcome barriers to employment.
- Continue funding and technical assistance to work centers that are committed to facilitating on-going transitions to integrated employment.
- Make sure that everyone understands and implements the interagency agreement between the Department of Public Instruction, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Department of Health Services so that planning for employment after school can begin by age 14.
- Make sure that people understand work incentives so that they realize that they can get a good job without losing vital services that they need to live in the community.

If you support our Employment First position, you or your organization can sign on below:

Signature Section

Organization Name: _____

Signature of Authorized Representative: _____

Date Signed: _____

Send signed form to: Fil Clissa
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