

# EMPLOYMENT FIRST COLORADO

Everyone Can Work!

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## What is Employment First?

- Employment First, means that employment in the general workforce should be the first and preferred option for working age individuals with disabilities, regardless of level of disability, receiving assistance from publicly funded systems.
- "Employment First" refers to state and local systems change initiatives resulting in increased employment outcomes for people with disabilities.

## Employment First Principles

- Everyone has employable strengths and can work in the competitive labor market with the right measure of support and in jobs well-matched to individual interests, talents, and abilities.
- For people with more significant barriers to employment, customized employment (involving personalizing the employment relationship between an employee and employer to meet the needs of both) and/or systematic instructional techniques may be useful.

## BENEFITS OF EMPLOYMENT FIRST

### For People with Disabilities

**Regular Jobs:** All working age citizens, regardless of disability, have the opportunity to work in the community and receive supports.

**Interaction:** Working side-by-side with co-workers in a diverse and integrated workplace.

**Money:** Earn at least minimum wage with opportunities for advancement.

**Self-Worth and Dignity:** Employment First practices support the self-worth and dignity of all people through competitive employment.

### For Employers

**Talent Pipeline:** Employees with disabilities contribute to a skilled and diverse workforce.

**Eligibility for Tax Credits:** The Work Opportunity Tax Credit can reduce employer tax liability by as much as \$2400-\$9600 per hire for qualified employees.

**Satisfaction:** Research shows that people with disabilities have high employee retention rates!

### For Communities:

**Tax Base:** Increase tax base as more people go to work, resulting in reduced reliance on public benefits.

**Contributions:** Vibrant communities as more individuals are working and contributing.

## At a Glance:

### Community Integrated Employment (CIE)

- In businesses typically found in the community
- Competitive Wage
- Equal opportunity for advancement
- Interaction with nondisabled coworkers same as other employees in like positions.

### Employment First Colorado Partners

- Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE)
- Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)
- Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF)
- Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE)
- Colorado Workforce Development Council (CWDC)
- Colorado Department of Education (CDE)
- Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS)
- Office of Behavioral Health (OBH)
- Employment First Advisory Partnership (EFAP)
- **And you!**

# Current Employment First Happenings!

## ***Employment First Recommendation Implementation***

Staff will be dedicated to implement EFAP recommendations involving: 1) training for DVR and CDE staff on the employment of people with the most significant disabilities; 2) developing strategies to make Colorado a model employer of people with disabilities; 3) expanding benefits planning services and 4) ensuring effectiveness of Individual Placement and Support (IPS) supported employment contracts.

### ***The Office of Employment First***

The Office of Employment First will be created in 2019 to make Colorado a national leader in cross-disability Employment First programs. Its functions will include.

#### **Training and Education:**

- Become the statewide training agency for Employment First policy and practice.
- Develop and deliver Employment First curriculum for individuals with disabilities, families, state agencies, educators, employers, service providers, potential service providers and communities to include options for pursuing Competitive Integrated Employment and supported employment mechanisms.
- Coordinate the provision of training that leads to required certification for supported employment service providers pursuant to SB18-145.
- Develop and deliver disability benefits counseling curriculum for individuals and families.

#### **Technical Assistance:**

Provide technical assistance to employers and state agencies for developing and implementing supported employment models that may be replicated across business communities

#### **Communications:**

Be the focal point for Employment First communications to local, state and national audiences through print, social media, website and broadcast services.

#### **Supported Employment Pilot Program:**

A pilot program will be created that provides additional payments to employment service providers when supported employment outcomes have been successfully achieved.

#### **Customized Employment Services Expansion**

Staff funded through this program will help to ensure the effective implementation of customized employment programs throughout Colorado.

## **Learn more:**

<https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/dvr/employment-first-advisory-partnership>