

# EMPLOYMENT FIRST:

## A Review of Successful State Strategies for Improving Employment Outcomes among People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

August 16, 2013



ONE Community Working Together

**NASDDDS**

National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services

---

### Principal Authors

*Jean Winsor Ph.D. and Rie Kennedy-Lizotte MBA*



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

Introduction ..... 1

History of Employment First Initiatives and Policies ..... 1

Employment First Policies Implemented through State Policy or Legislation ..... 3

Using Effective Strategies for System Change..... 8

Achieving Change While Managing Expectations ..... 24

Improving Employment First Activities and Outcomes in Arizona ..... 26

References ..... 28

---

# INTRODUCTION

Employment services have long been available through state intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) agencies. However, the focus on improving the numbers of individuals with IDD working in integrated jobs in the community as a priority policy goal has varied over time and across states. An estimated 110,295 individuals received integrated employment services from state IDD agencies in 2011. While there was significant growth in participation in integrated employment through the 1990s, this number has remained unchanged since 2001 and the percent of individuals supported in integrated employment services has actually decreased from a peak of 24.6 percent in 2001 to 19.3 percent in FY 2011 (Butterworth, Hall, Smith, Migliore, Winsor, Domin, and Sulewski, 2013). Of pressing concern are data suggesting that the focus of service provision has, in many states, 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 (Butterworth et al, 2013). A recent survey of providers of developmental disabilities services suggests that between 2002 and 2010 participation in non-work services grew from 33 percent to 43 percent for individuals with IDD (Domin & Butterworth, 2012).

Over the past 10 years state agency administrators and stakeholders in many states have begun championing integrated employment and advocating for states to develop strategic goals and operating policies that prioritize employment as the first choice and preferred outcome for day services for individuals with IDD. Collectively, these actions have been united under the concept of Employment First.

## HISTORY OF EMPLOYMENT FIRST INITIATIVES AND POLICIES

Employment First strategies consist of a clear set of guiding principles and practices promulgated through state statute, regulation, and operational procedures that target employment in typical work settings as the priority for state funding and the purpose of supports furnished to persons with IDD during the day. Employment First policies anchor a service delivery system, focusing funding, resource allocation, training, daily assistance, and even the provision of residential supports on the overall objective of employment, strengthening the capacity of all individuals receiving publicly financed supports to enter the workforce and become contributing members of society (Moseley, 2009). Employment First represents a commitment by states, and state intellectual/ developmental disability agencies, to the propositions that all individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities: (a) are capable of performing work in typical integrated employment settings; (b) should receive as a matter of state policy employment related services and supports as a priority over other facility-based and non-work day services, and (c) should be paid at minimum or prevailing wage rates.

The implementation of employment first policies requires that significant changes be made in the program structure and funding of traditional systems in order to extend employment supports to all. The achievement of employment first goals rests on a state's ability to create flexible person-centered support options for people with the most complex needs, implementing advanced support alternatives

---

that lead individuals along a path toward integrated employment by fostering personal and social development, active community engagement and social participation. Achieving the goal of employment requires that substantive improvements be made in day and non-work services based on a commitment to ensuring people with intensive needs continue to receive all necessary supports as the system changes.

Employment First policies are becoming increasingly prevalent. Many state IDD agencies are in the process of exploring, legislating, or implementing Employment First policies. As of July 2013 twenty-six states can be identified as having legislation, a formal policy directive or other official state mandate addressing employment as a priority outcome in the delivery of day and employment services for people with disabilities. Eleven states have passed legislation: California, Delaware, Illinois, Kansas, Maine, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Texas, Utah, Virginia, and Washington. The other fifteen, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, and Tennessee have introduced the initiative through non-legislative actions including policy directives, Executive Orders, or similar official policy statements (Hoff, Revised July 2013).

State policies are unique to each service system and states are at varying stages of formal policy development and implementation. Several states have strong grassroots initiatives that are working to infuse the idea of Employment First throughout the state; these states include Georgia, Idaho, Iowa, Indiana, Minnesota, Montana, North Carolina, and Wisconsin.

On the national level, individual integrated employment has emerged as a policy priority, both in the disability arena and beyond. APSE, the only national organization exclusively focusing on integrated employment, has issued a series of policy papers emphasizing the importance of integrated employment and has formally changed its name and logo to “Association of People Supporting Employment First.” The National Governors Association, under Governor Markel’s (DE) chairmanship, launched a Blue Print for Governors entitled, *A Better Bottom Line: Employing People with Disabilities* to increase employment for individuals with intellectual and other significant disabilities. The Alliance for Full Participation, a coalition of disability advocacy organizations, established employment as the priority for their 2011 national summit, attended by over 1,250 people. This marked the mid-point in a campaign to double employment for people with IDD by 2015 (Walsh, 2011). The National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities released a report entitled *The Time is Now: Embracing Employment First* in conjunction with the Alliance for Full Participation summit (see <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/aidd/resource/the-time-is-now-embracing-employment-first>). The Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities has issued multi-year system change grants to support states in cross system collaboration to address increasing employment outcomes for youth and young adults as well as grants to establish community of practice opportunities for states engaged in implementation of employment first practices (see <http://www.acl.gov/programs/aidd/Programs/PNS/Resources/CommOfPractice%20CIE4IwIDD.aspx>). Further, the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) at the U.S. Department of Labor (2009) has issued policy statements and developed grant opportunities and communities of practice to support implementation of Employment First in several states. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (2011), released guidance to the field clarifying their commitment to individual integrated employment as an outcome of employment related services under the home and community-based services waiver program (Mann, 2011). Finally, and most recently, a new competitive grant program, Promoting Readiness of Minors in Supplemental Security Income (PROMISE) was launched by the Obama Administration to improve the education and career

---

outcomes of low-income children with disabilities receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI). The program is designed to serve children with disabilities, ages 14-16, who are receiving SSI and their families and applications were due in late August 2013.

As noted above, the actualization of employment first requires that significant changes be made in the design and operation of states' developmental disabilities service delivery systems. Such changes in state policy and practice rarely take place in a linear fashion, but rather occur as a series of activities or collection of initiatives that take place concurrently over time, all directed toward achieving the common goal of increasing the numbers of people with disabilities participating in integrated employment. This report begins with a review of the strategies and approaches used by states that are addressing employment first through policy change, legislation or other formal means. The second section analyzes the changes that those states have made and are making through the lens of the High Performing States system change model used by the State Employment Leadership Network (SELN)<sup>1</sup>. The third section discusses the challenges of achieving change and meeting expectations within the context of state IDD service delivery systems. The fourth section concludes the paper with a series of recommendations and suggested next steps for Arizona in its efforts to improve employment first activities and outcomes.

## **EMPLOYMENT FIRST POLICIES IMPLEMENTED THROUGH STATE POLICY OR LEGISLATION**

A first level analysis of states that have Employment First policies was conducted focusing only on states that formally implemented Employment First policies, legislation, or directives. This initial analysis consisted of document review of state policies, regulations, and data on state employment outcomes. The review included current state policies and legislation, previous Institute for Community Inclusion University of Massachusetts Boston (ICI) case study work, and ICI/NASDDDS State Employment Leadership Network (SELN) project activities and site visits to states. Elements that were used to classify the states that were identified in this first level analysis included: the method of implementing employment first (non-legislative<sup>2</sup> or legislation), the focus of initiative (cross disability or intellectual/developmental disability), responsibility for implementation (where applicable lead agency, members, and partners), date of implementation, and changes in employment outcomes since implementation measured by data reported to the ICI's National Survey of State Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Agencies' Day and Employment Services. The information is found in Table 1 and Table 2.

---

<sup>1</sup> The State Employment Leadership Network (SELN) is a multi-state community of practice managed by the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services and the Institute on Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston. The SELN provides technical assistance to 30 states to improve employment outcomes among people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of this document, non-legislative methods are defined as policy directives, Executive Orders, or similar official policy statements.

**Table 1: States with Employment 1<sup>st</sup> Initiatives that have been implemented by their state government as of May 20, 2013<sup>3</sup> Adapted from (Hoff, 2013)**

State	Method of Implementing Employment First Initiative	Focus of Initiative	Responsibility for Implementation
Arkansas (AR)	Non-Legislative	Cross disability	Lead: Department of Human Services  Partners: Agencies administering disability services, vocational rehabilitation, workforce services and education, as well as from consumer advocates and disability service providers
Colorado (CO)	Non-Legislative	Intellectual/developmental disability	Division for Developmental Disabilities
Connecticut (CT)	Non-Legislative	Intellectual/developmental disability	Department of Developmental Disabilities Services
Delaware (DE)	Non-Legislative	Cross disability	Lead: Employment First Oversight Committee (11 members)  Members: 4 people with disabilities, 1 CRP staff member, 1 Division of Industrial Affairs staff, 1 Division of Vocational Rehabilitation staff, Secretary of Education, Secretary of Health and Social Services, Director of Developmental Disabilities Services, and Chair of Developmental Disabilities Council
Kansas (KS)	Legislation	Cross disability	Lead: Employment first Oversight Commission (5 members)  Members: 4 people with disabilities or who are knowledgeable about disabilities  Partners: All state agencies
Louisiana (LA)	Non-Legislative	Intellectual/developmental disability	Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities
Maryland	Non-Legislative	Intellectual/	Developmental Disabilities Administration

<sup>3</sup> Please see the APSE website map for additional information and links to state specific resources: <http://www.apse.org/employmentfirst/>

State	Method of Implementing Employment First Initiative	Focus of Initiative	Responsibility for Implementation
(MD)		developmental disability	
Maine (ME)	Non-Legislative	Cross disability	Department of Health and Human Services
Massachusetts (MA)	Non-Legislative	Intellectual/developmental disability	Department of Developmental Services
Michigan (MI)	Non-Legislative	Cross disability	<p>Lead: Bureau of Community Mental Health Services, including the establishment of permanent state level staff member</p> <p>Partners: Prepaid Inpatient Health Plans and Community Mental Health Services Programs, including local staff members who shall be responsible for implementation of the Policy and sits on employment leadership team</p>
Missouri (MO)	Non-Legislative	Intellectual/developmental disability	Department of Mental Health Division of Developmental Disabilities
New Jersey (NJ)	Non-Legislative	Cross disability	Department of Labor and Workforce Development and the Department of Human Services
North Dakota (ND)	Legislation	Cross disability	<p>Lead: Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities</p> <p>Members: Executive director of the North Dakota association of community providers, one community employer representative, one individual with a disability, and one family member of an individual with a disability.</p> <p>Ex officio members: director of the department of commerce division of workforce development, director of the department of human services division of vocational rehabilitation, the superintendent of public instruction's director of special education, the director of the protection and advocacy project, and the head of the department of human</p>

State	Method of Implementing Employment First Initiative	Focus of Initiative	Responsibility for Implementation
			services developmental disabilities programs.
Oklahoma (OK)	Non-Legislative	Intellectual/developmental disability	Department of Human Services
Ohio (OH)	Non-Legislative	Intellectual/developmental disability	<p>Lead: Department of Developmental Disabilities coordinates the members of the Governor's Employment First Taskforce</p> <p>Members: Department of Education, Department of Job and Family Services, Department of Mental Health, and Rehabilitation Services Commission</p>
Oregon (OR)	Non-Legislative	Intellectual/developmental disability	Office of Developmental Disabilities Services
Pennsylvania (PA)	Non-Legislative	Intellectual/developmental disability	Department of Public Welfare, Intellectual Disabilities Services
Rhode Island (RI)	Non-Legislative	Intellectual/developmental disability	Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals
Tennessee (TN)	Non-Legislative	Intellectual/developmental disability	Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
Utah (UT)	Legislation	Cross disability	Department of Workforce Services, the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation, and the Division of Services for People with Disabilities
Virginia (VA)	Legislation	Cross disability	<p>Lead: Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services'</p> <p>Members: Community Service Boards, Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, Department of Education (DOE), Virginia Board for People with Disabilities (VBPD), Virginia Commonwealth University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Workplace Supports and Job Retention, and vendor organizations such as the Virginia Association of Community</p>

State	Method of Implementing Employment First Initiative	Focus of Initiative	Responsibility for Implementation
			Rehabilitation Programs, Arc of Virginia, and Virginia Association of Providers of Supported Employment
Washington (WA)	Policy followed by Legislation	Intellectual/developmental disability	Division of Developmental Disabilities

Analysis of the information displayed in Table 1 illustrates that states have chosen a variety of strategies to implement their employment first policies.

States that have implemented employment first through non-legislative approaches include: Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Louisiana, Maryland, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Tennessee. States that have implemented employment first through legislation are Kansas, North Dakota, Utah, and Virginia. Washington’s policy began as an IDD agency internal policy directive and after several years became legislation.

The focus population of the state employment first policies can be described as IDD specific or cross-disability. States with IDD population specific policies are Colorado, Connecticut, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Oklahoma, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, and Washington. States with cross-disability population focused policies are Arkansas, Delaware, Kansas, Maine, Michigan, North Dakota, Utah, and Virginia.

State employment first policies assign responsibility for implementation in different ways. Some confer responsibility to a solo state agency, others target a primary state agency with specific assigned partners, a third group of states designate employment oversight committees, and other states use a combination of the above. States that assign a solo agency to implement the policy are Colorado, Louisiana, Maryland, Maine, Massachusetts, Missouri, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, and Washington. By contrast, Arkansas, Michigan, Ohio, and Virginia assigned a state agency with primary responsibility and identified specific partners to be included in the implementation process. States with oversight committees are Delaware, Kansas, and North Dakota. Both New Jersey and Utah assigned multiple state agencies to collaborate and lead their efforts.

While the classification of the states based upon these strategies is helpful for cataloguing efforts, it is important to note that many of the states described above have coalitions that are working to scale up various policies, directives, and executive orders to statewide legislation that encompasses all people with disabilities and targets every state agency that supports individuals with disabilities. Analysis of the data presented in Table 2 suggests that the majority of states have implemented their employment first policies for three or fewer years. State implementation dates are summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2: State Employment First Implementation Dates**

States	Year Implemented
North Dakota and Rhode Island	2013
Delaware, New Jersey, Ohio, and Virginia	2012
Connecticut, Kansas, Louisiana, Michigan, Missouri, and Utah	2011
Arkansas, Maine, and Massachusetts	2010
Maryland and Oregon	2008
Oklahoma	2005
Washington (policy)	2004, updated 2012 directive
Tennessee	2002
Colorado	2001
Pennsylvania	1991

Because many states' employment first activities have been in operation for a limited period of time it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of the policies and practices that have been established. Data reported to the ICI's National Survey of State Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Agencies' Day and Employment Services indicates that four states, Oklahoma, Oregon, Tennessee and Washington have, as a result of their employment first policies, increased the number of persons with disabilities receiving employment supports by over 100 in each state since 2008. These data suggest that system level changes are not immediately reflected in individual employment outcomes but rather take time to produce results. Further, the period between implementation and collection of employment service and outcome data has been too short in the majority of states to determine if employment first is enabling the state to make the deep changes in policy and practice needed to sustain and grow the integrated employment system.

Initial improvements in employment data suggest early progress, but are not necessarily indicators of systems change. Furthermore, several states were engaged in the process of changing their employment service system prior to adopting statewide employment first policies including, Delaware, New Jersey, Ohio, Virginia, Massachusetts, Maryland, Oregon, Oklahoma, and Washington. Actions in these states suggest that systems change efforts can begin prior to the implementation of any formal employment first actions. Future research may find that these efforts were crucial to state success because they prepared the state for the changes needed for employment first.

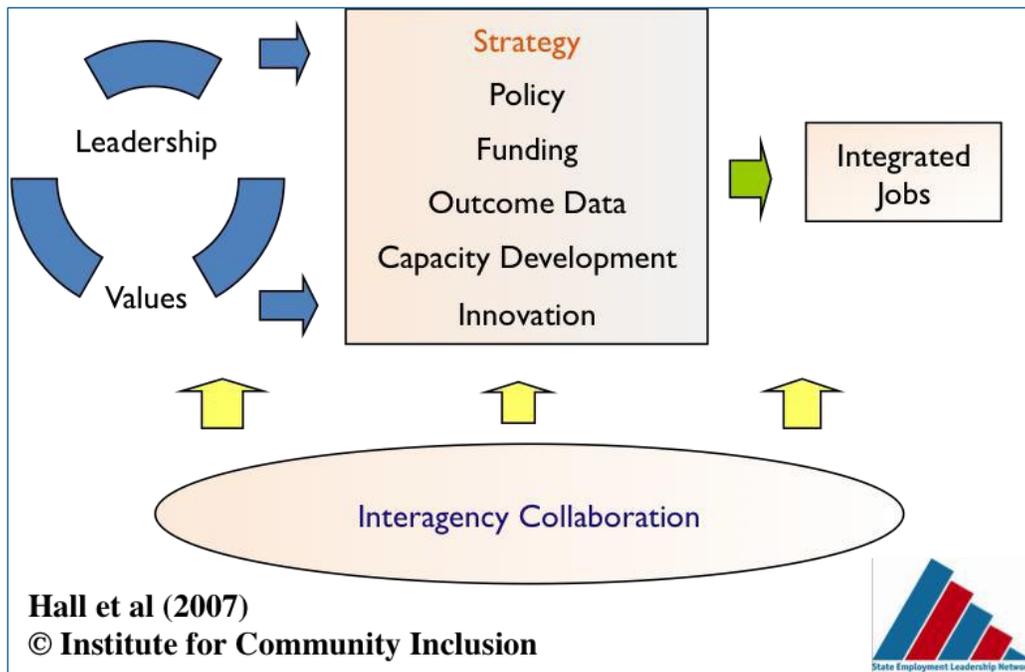
## USING EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR SYSTEM CHANGE

The introduction of Employment First policies can make an important contribution to raising expectations, improving outcomes, and increasing self-sufficiency for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. However, research suggests that while the existence of a policy is important to provide a vision for practice and expectations, the existence of the policy by itself does not guarantee that more people with disabilities will become employed. More than a decade of

research by the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston (ICI) has found that employment outcomes only improve if all policies and practices are realigned to support employment as the goal for all service recipients (for additional information on research projects and findings see [http://www.communityinclusion.org/project.php?project\\_id=54](http://www.communityinclusion.org/project.php?project_id=54)).

Researchers from the ICI examined 13 state I/DD agencies that in 1999 reported more than 30 percent of individuals in integrated employment and then conducted in-depth case study research in three states (CO, NH, and WA). This led to the development of a theoretical model that identified how contextual factors, system-level strategies, and system goals support integrated employment outcomes (Hall, Butterworth, Winsor, Gilmore, and Metzel, 2007). The model illustrates the common strategies and approaches found across states with high levels of integrated employment outcomes, identifying seven characteristics of high performing states. Taken in its entirety the High Performing States model (Figure 1) suggests that each element contributes to systems change: leadership, strategic goals and operating policy, training and technical assistance, interagency collaboration and partnership, services and service innovation, and performance management and data management.

**Figure 1: High Performing States Model**



Evidence drawn from states participating in the SELN supports the need for a comprehensive system of support for integrated employment and the utility of the High Performing States model. Between 2004 and 2009, SELN states reported a 23 percent increase in the number of individuals in integrated employment services compared to a 7 percent increase in non-SELN states in the same period.

The High Performing States Model provides states with a framework in which to strategically implement system changes to support individual integrated employment as an outcome of day and employment services. This model provides a format for identifying the best pieces of states' employment first agendas. There is no one size fits all in employment first policy and process but the High Performing States Model identifies the essential elements for success that need to be addressed to fully meet the intent of employment first.

**Table 3: Elements of High Performing States**

<b>Element</b>	<b>Description</b>
Leadership	Local and state level administrators are clearly identifiable as “champions” for employment.
Strategic goals and operating policy	State mission, goals and operating policies emphasize employment as a preferred outcome.
Financing and contracting methods	Funding mechanisms and contracts with providers emphasize employment as the preferred outcome.
Training and technical assistance	There is a sustained and significant investment in employment-related training and technical assistance.
Interagency collaboration and partnership	Through interagency agreements and relationships, provider collaboration, and outreach to stakeholders, employment is shared as a common goal.
Services and service innovation	The state IDD agency works to create opportunities for providers, individuals, and families to make optimum use of the resources available for employment; includes disseminating information related to creative strategies to support individuals in employment.
Performance measurement and data management	Comprehensive data systems are used as a strategic planning tool to further the state’s goals of increasing employment.

States are implementing each of the seven elements through a wide variety of operational practices, funding methodologies, and training procedures that are designed to increase the number of individuals with developmental disabilities who are employed in integrated community jobs. Examples of state practices that align elements of the High Performing States model are described in Tables 4-10. Information in Tables 4-10 comes from research and technical assistance activities conducted by the ICI and the SELN.

States with high rates of integrated employment are able to point to local and state-level administrators who are clearly identifiable as champions for employment and consistently demonstrate a clear commitment to supporting people in individual jobs in the community. Indicators of this type of leadership are: top management develops and implements clear and unambiguous policy emphasizing employment as a priority at all levels and stages of service delivery; there are specific staff within the state who are responsible for the development of employment policy, strategy, and training; there is a core network of stakeholders within the state who are committed to and advocate for employment; and there are specific staff people at the local or regional level who are responsible for managing the development of employment services and supports.

**Table 4: State leadership**

State	Description of state action	Impact on integrated employment policy and practice
CT	Regional Employment Self Determination Coordinators	Self-determination employment coordinators are responsible for implementing self-determination, employment training, and technical assistance activities for DDS staff and for agency providers. Self-determination employment instructors are responsible for assisting self-advocate coordinators to promote employment and self-determination to consumers throughout all regions in the state.
KS	Kansas Executive Order 10-10 directed “all state agency heads to increase coordination and collaboration across state agencies to provide Kansans with disabilities optimum opportunity to be competitively employed in equal numbers to their peers without disabilities and to help Kansans with disabilities meet the human resource needs of Kansas businesses.”	<p>State agencies are expected to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Develop a shared vision and mission statement for Kansas that will result in Kansans with disabilities becoming competitively employed in equal numbers to their peers without disabilities and capable of meeting the needs of Kansas businesses.</li> <li>2) Inventory state plans, strategic plans, and mission and vision statements, to ensure competitive, integrated, employment of people with disabilities is encouraged and supported.</li> <li>3) Identify policies and procedures within agencies that are a disincentive to competitive employment of people with disabilities, and revise these so that they support competitive employment.</li> <li>4) Implement changes necessary to coordinate employment programs across agencies to maximize the employment of Kansans with disabilities, as well as tap into an under-utilized source of labor.</li> </ol>

State	Description of state action	Impact on integrated employment policy and practice
		<p>5) Explore the possibility of implementing new initiatives that will increase the number of Kansans with disabilities who are competitively employed.</p> <p>6) Identify mechanisms for determining baseline data of how many people with disabilities are currently employed in Kansas, how many become employed, and the fiscal impact of their being employed.</p> <p>7) Report annually to the Governor the number of employed Kansans with disabilities and the fiscal impact for the State of Kansas.</p>
TN	<p>The Tennessee Employment Consortium (TEC) is a statewide organization focused on increasing the number of Tennesseans in integrated employment. The consortium comprises volunteers from DIDD, the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS), the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities, the ARC of Tennessee, the Center on Disability and Employment at the University of Tennessee, community rehabilitation providers (CRPs), family members, and other stakeholders.</p>	<p>TEC's ability to organize collaborative activities across state agencies, advocacy organizations, and CRPs has played an important role in increasing integrated employment outcomes. TEC focuses on identifying the barriers to integrated employment in Tennessee, and developing and implementing interventions to promote change in the employment system.</p> <p>To support their goal of increasing integrated employment outcomes, TEC has developed annual work plans to guide their progress as well as a state policy evaluation tool. The policy evaluation tool measures how well current and future state policies support DIDD's goal of integrated employment as the preferred day service outcome.</p>

States with high rates of integrated employment structure their state mission, goals, and operating policies to emphasize employment as a preferred outcome.

**Table 5: State strategic goals and operating policy**

State	Description of state action	Impact on integrated employment policy and practice
CT	Career planning process and tool are integrated into the Individual Service Planning Process	A career plan is implemented when the Individual Planning team determines that more information is needed to help plan for the supports that an individual may need to find, get and keep a job. Providers can request one-time money to complete a career plan assessment. Payments are made for face-to-face assessment activities (interviews, observations, and pen & paper assessments) and an additional payment is made when the completed career plan is turned in to the individual's resource manager.
TN	Community based work assessment every three years for anyone not employed in an integrated job	Provided opportunity for individuals to make a more informed decision in regards to employment opportunities.
WA	Working Age Adult Policy was adopted in 2004 and went into full effect on July 1, 2006. This policy "designates employment supports as the primary method of furnishing state-financed day services to adult participants." Emphasizing community employment as the primary service option, the policy further states "services for persons under the age of 62 that do not emphasize the pursuit or maintenance of employment in integrated settings can be authorized only by exception to policy" (WA DSHS, DDD, "County Services for Working Age Adults" Policy 4.11).	The policy does not eliminate sheltered employment or community access services; rather, it focuses supports towards gainful employment.

States with high rates of integrated employment structure their funding mechanisms and contracts with providers to emphasize employment as the preferred outcome. Examples of this include making individual integrated employment the most advantageous service at the individual and agency levels, including goals and benchmarks for individual integrated employment in service contracts, and developing rate-setting methodologies that correspond to the services needed to support individuals to explore, obtain, and maintain individual integrated employment.

**Table 6: Financing and contracting methods for employment**

State	Description of state action	Impact on integrated employment policy and practice
CT	Multi-year process of examining service payment rates and implementing revisions.	Rates are based on a clear understanding of service costs and staff costs, including the reasonable calculation of billable hours. Transportation is not included in the rate. A (standardized) level of need assessment tool is used. The use of benchmark funding creates incentive to support people in jobs. The funding system offers a steady income stream that can be used by providers to fund immediate interventions in the workplace even if someone has transitioned to less intensive support services.
MA	Multi-year process to shift to a funding model based upon individual clients.	In 2009, funding began shifting from block contracts available to providers through a bidding process to a more open process of funding and selection of service provider. DDS has become increasingly clear regarding what services they intend to purchase from providers. The goal is to have a new set of standardized hourly rates for each of their three definitions of employment settings (individual, group, and center-based).
OK	Funding model and Medicaid Waiver policy is designed to support community employment over other outcomes.	Oklahoma has invested in training administrative staff to understand the ways in which the funding structures operate. There is a clear distinct structure for funding employment stabilization services including support fading. There is a detailed oversight of the funding of services and allocation of individual resources with contract management occurring at the case management and quality assurance level. Financial incentives are offered for integrated employment and for serving individuals with significant needs.

States with high rates of integrated employment are noted for having a sustained and significant investment in employment-related training and technical assistance. Ways in which states infuse this element into their service systems include providing training and technical assistance to service providers to improve service capacity and quality; requiring that competency-based training be completed by employment support staff, including job developers and job coaches; and crafting waiver service definitions that require minimum competencies and qualifications.

**Table 7: Training and technical assistance for employment**

State	Description of state action	Impact on integrated employment policy and practice
CT	Authorized state funds to support training activities for providers, individuals with IDD, and other stakeholders.	<p>Providers are offered one-time funds to cover the costs of “release time” when staff attend trainings. Additionally, infrastructure development funds were recently awarded to six agencies to help enhance the employment services they are able to deliver. A variety of employment materials were developed through funds obtained through the Connect-Ability Medicaid Infrastructure Grant. DDS also developed an employment website where these and other employment resources can be found. Lastly, DDS is involved in the Youth Leadership Forum, which provides training on self-advocacy and leadership skills to youth with IDD.</p> <p>DDS has also partnered with the Department of Rehabilitative Services (DORS) and with the Department of Education (DOE) to provide three separate employment conferences over the last two years.</p>
ME	The University of Maine’s Center for Community Inclusion and Disability Studies (CCIDS), along with the Maine Department of Behavioral and Developmental Services (BDS) and the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, developed the Maine Employment Curriculum (MEC).	The comprehensive curriculum fosters best practices in employment supports for people with disabilities statewide by using a cadre of trainers who are supported by the Maine Employment Curriculum project staff. The Maine Employment Curriculum ultimately seeks an increase in the number of integrated, community-based supports available and builds the capacity of the employment support provider community to achieve this goal. Significant changes have

State	Description of state action	Impact on integrated employment policy and practice
		<p>occurred in Maine since the BDS policy and the MEC curriculum were implemented. A number of sheltered workshops and other segregated day services have closed, and these agency-sponsored programs have converted to integrated, community-based supports. Since the primary trainers are staff from employment providers, not only is the capacity of the provider community increasing, but so is their overall commitment to integrated employment for individuals with ID/DD.</p>
OR	<p>Invested in the development of training model for case managers: Keys for Case Managers</p>	<p>Provided case managers with tools and skills to address pathways to employment for everyone including those who have spent 10 + years in sheltered employment.</p>
WA	<p>25 plus years of significant and sustained investment in training and technical assistance</p>	<p>The development of a culture of employment is seen as an expectation and key to assuring people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are not relegated to living at or below poverty level. The state/counties contract for training activities, and maintain active relationships with a wide variety of external consultants. For many years, Washington has hosted the Ellensburg conference as a chance for all levels of staff, from front-line day and employment staff to agency administrators, to learn about innovations in the field. Collectively these activities provide ongoing opportunities for networking, debate, and sharing innovations.</p>

States with high rates of integrated employment have interagency agreements and relationships, provider collaboration, and outreach to stakeholders with employment shared as a common goal.

**Table 8: Interagency collaboration and partnerships**

State	Description of state action	Impact on integrated employment policy and practice
DE	Integration of residential and youth services in planning for employment.	<p>In Delaware, cooperation between residential day programs and families has been prioritized. Families are requested to assist in the development of the individual’s services plans and support the prioritization of employment.</p> <p>Delaware is also known for having strong relationships between the education and vocational rehabilitation agencies. The Early Start to Supported Employment (ESSE) pilot started in 2005 with the goal of providing a more seamless transition for students who would benefit from supported employment services when leaving school and entering the adult workforce. An interagency project team was established to guide the pilot work and ensure all required parties knew their role and shared information and equal responsibility within the project. Early Start is a collaboration between DDDS, Education, and Vocational Rehabilitation.</p>
MO	Broad based collaboration across services for youth and adults with IDD.	<p>The Division of DD and the VR agency created a case collaboration manual. Cross agency training for staff will occur in 2012 – 2013. Missouri was one of six states to be awarded a Project of National Significance grant through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Developmental Disabilities. A consortium of leaders leads this “Show Me Careers” grant from the following agencies and organizations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University of Missouri Kansas City Institute for Human Development</li> </ul>

State	Description of state action	Impact on integrated employment policy and practice
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Missouri Division of Developmental Disabilities</li> <li>• Missouri Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities</li> <li>• Missouri Office of Adult Learning and Rehabilitation Services</li> <li>• Missouri Office of Special Education</li> <li>• Missouri People First Associated Industries of Missouri (AIM)</li> <li>• Workforce Development</li> </ul> <p>The Division built a partnership with businesses through the creation of the Missouri Business Alliance, which is coordinated by the President of AIM. AIM is Missouri's business trade</p>
OH	<p>Executive Order 2012-05K: The Establishment of the Employment First Policy and Taskforce to Expand Community Employment Opportunities for Working-Age Ohioans with Developmental Disabilities. As part of the Executive Order the Governor's Employment First Taskforce ("EFT") was "created to collaborate, coordinate and improve employment outcomes for working-age adults with developmental disabilities." The Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) was appointed to lead the EFT and to include representatives from the Ohio Department of Education (ODE), Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS), Ohio Department of Mental Health (ODMH), and Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission (ORSC) who have authority to act on behalf of their respective agencies.</p>	<p>The EFT was directed to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1). Review and consider the recommendations of the State Employment Leadership Network report to increase opportunities for community employment for Ohioans with developmental disabilities.</li> <li>2). Review and align policies, procedures, eligibility, and enrollment and planning for services for individuals, with the objective of increasing opportunities for community employment for Ohioans with developmental disabilities.</li> <li>3). Develop cross-agency tools to document eligibility, order of selection, assessment and planning for services for individuals.</li> <li>4). Identify best practices, effective partnerships, sources of available federal funds, opportunities for shared</li> </ol>

State	Description of state action	Impact on integrated employment policy and practice
		<p>services among existing providers and county boards of developmental disabilities, and the means to expand model programs, to increase community employment opportunities for those with developmental disabilities.</p> <p>5). Identify and address areas where sufficient support is not currently available or where additional options are needed to assist those with developmental disabilities to work in community jobs.</p> <p>6). Establish interagency agreements to improve coordination of services and allow for data sharing as appropriate.</p> <p>7). Set benchmarks for improving community employment outcomes/services.</p>
WA	<p>Long term sustained efforts to build relationships at both the state agency and local agency levels to align different systems.</p>	<p>Dollars from the 1985 Systems Change Grant stimulated shared funding across agencies. This grant had the long-term impact of encouraging collaboration between different state agencies and was partly responsible for encouraging the state legislature to support regulation allowing DDD, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), and the Division of Mental Health (DMH) to share funding. In 1994, the legislature passed a provision that required DDD, DVR, and DMH to share funding around joint customers.</p> <p>In addition to state level interagency agreements, individual counties have developed innovative partnerships with other agencies and with community stakeholders.</p> <p>The Jobs by 21 Partnership Project in 2008 and 2009 demonstrated that for interagency planning conducted</p>

State	Description of state action	Impact on integrated employment policy and practice
		through county-based transition councils improved the ability of students to seamlessly transition from school to work. DVR and DDD effectively collaborate with schools to support transition age youth. The individual client Data Exchange Agreement between DDD and DVR is one way that these systems have worked together to support transition age youth obtain employment.

States with high rates of integrated employment create opportunities for providers, individuals, and families to make optimum use of the resources available for employment. This can include the dissemination of information related to creative strategies to support individuals in employment. Information may pertain to the movement of transition-age youth directly from school-to-work, the tying of funds to transition-age youth so that they are able to purchase long-term employment supports, the provision of benefits planning to all individuals seeking services, support for self-employment and customized employment, and the use of policy and practice to ensure that employment is the center of an individual’s service plan and wrap-around community supports are provided to support employment in the community.

**Table 9: Services and service innovation**

State	Description of action	Impact on integrated employment policy and practice
KS	Engagement of stakeholders in building a collation for employment first	<p>Prior to the introduction of the employment first legislation, an employment taskforce held an event to educate state legislators about employment first principles and develop support for the legislation. Additionally, constituents who supported employment first, including individuals with disabilities who wanted to work, but had been able to obtain employment services, contacted legislators.</p> <p>An employment first summit was held to encourage support for improving employment outcomes for all Kansans with disabilities. At the end of the summit, a public meeting was held, with all members of the Governor’s Cabinet invited. The meeting concluded with the recommendation that each of the cabinet members examine his/her agency’s internal policies and work across agencies to create cohesion within and across all state agencies</p>

State	Description of action	Impact on integrated employment policy and practice
		<p>regarding employment for persons with disabilities. Each cabinet member also committed to one task within his/her purview that would create accountability for employment outcomes.</p> <p>Lastly, Kansas has held family employment awareness trainings to educate families about employment. The goal of the training is not only to educate families about employment but also to help create demand for employment services across the state.</p>
MA	Education and outreach to multiple stakeholder groups	<p>In recent years, MA has hosted regional forums on promising transition-related practices that are in alignment with their Employment First vision. The state recently published School Days to Pay Days: An Employment Planning Guide for Families of Young Adults with Intellectual Disabilities (<a href="http://www.communityinclusion.org/schooldays/">http://www.communityinclusion.org/schooldays/</a>) as a transition resource, and an opportunity to communicate the message of Employment First as it relates to youth in the Commonwealth. Furthermore, DDS developed Explore-Prepare-Act, a video and training curriculum, in partnership with the Institute for Community Inclusion, and the Massachusetts Advocates Standing Strong. This three-hour curriculum, presented by self-advocates for self-advocates, provides an overview of the basic steps involved in finding a job and another strategy for supporting individuals to gain employment (<a href="http://www.exploreprepareact.org/">http://www.exploreprepareact.org/</a>).</p>
MO	Through its employment first working group and the Show-Me Careers project, Missouri is expanding outreach and engagement with stakeholders to improve employment outcomes.	<p>A series of “tip sheets” for families, individuals and service coordinators was created to share at intake, meetings, trainings about many different employment topics and focus on the state’s employment initiative.</p> <p>The Division of Developmental Disabilities Service Coordinator training manual emphasizes skills in transition. Employment coordinators provide a prescribed series of trainings across the state for businesses, school, service coordinators, and</p>

State	Description of action	Impact on integrated employment policy and practice
		<p>community rehabilitation providers. This includes information about the Division's employment policy.</p> <p>A series of webinars were conducted throughout 2011 – 2012 to inform providers and service coordinators of the state's new waiver services and employment policies and Employment coordinators at regional offices participate on Community Transition teams throughout Missouri and train school personnel, families on the policy and provide additional technical assistance.</p> <p>A three-module training was completed for Associated Industries of Missouri. AIM is the manufacturing trade organization in the state and has almost 1000 business members.</p> <p>The Division provided trainings at several state conferences on the state's new employment policy during the past year including the APSE MO annual conference, the Visions for the Future conference of self-advocates called Real Voices - Real Choices (which had over 600 attendees in 2012), the Spring Training Institute, and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Summer Transition Institute. The policy was also been discussed at a variety of meetings with other partners such as employment provider meetings, case management meetings and People First statewide meetings.</p> <p>Missouri is moving forward to make use of the Ticket to Work. The IDD agency is trying to identify individuals in the system who may be candidates for the Ticket. A series of marketing materials regarding TTW have been developed for individuals and family members.</p>

States with high rates of integrated employment have developed and implemented performance management, quality assurance, and program oversight methods that provide information about employment that is used as a strategic planning tool to further the state's goals of increasing

employment. States collect and disseminate information about employment outcomes and use data to inform state agency strategy and contracting.

**Table 10: State performance measurement and data management**

State	Description of state action	Impact on integrated employment policy and practice
MA	<p>The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) has collected annual data on employment participation for over 10 years. Currently a well-established point-in-time approach that reports employment status once a year, the system is being expanded to include real-time placement data. This addition to the data system was implemented in Fall 2012.</p>	<p>“Point-in-time” data on employment settings, hours worked, wages, and other variables are collected across a four-week period every April for every individual.</p> <p>Providers enter data into a secure web-based data collection tool.</p> <p>A new job placement tool collects real-time data on new job placements at the time of placement. Providers receive a summary report each year that addresses employment participation, wages earned, and hours worked, and provides a comparison between their agency’s outcomes and outcomes at the state and regional levels.</p> <p>DDS staff has access to a website that provides detailed outcome data at the provider, area office, regional, and state levels. Providers have been motivated by the availability of employment provider comparison data and the ability to measure new job placements as they occur.</p> <p>Providers developed a transformation plan in Fall 2011, and are accountable to goals for new job placements.</p>
OR	<p>Data are collected on participation in work and non-work settings and employment outcomes in April and September of each year. Information is collected, analyzed, and published on an agency-supported employment website for county and statewide use by individuals, families, providers, local and state funders, and others in decision-making and continuous-improvement</p>	<p>The primary performance measurement is the percentage of people with developmental disabilities who receive day supports from the Department of Human Services Developmental Disabilities Services that are working in integrated employment settings. Stakeholders can access data reports at: <a href="http://www.dhs.state.or.us/dd/supp_emp/outcomes.html">http://www.dhs.state.or.us/dd/supp_emp/outcomes.html</a></p>

State	Description of state action	Impact on integrated employment policy and practice
	efforts.	
WA	<p>Since the early 1980s, the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) has collected and tracked wage and hour information for individuals on a monthly basis. Early on in the development of the state's integrated employment system, DDD developed measurable monthly goals to increase the quantity and quality of employment placements. Data were collected on individual employment outcomes and used to assess whether monthly goals were met at the regional, county, and vendor levels.</p>	<p>Data on employment setting, hours worked, and wages are included in the provider billing process, and must be submitted for a provider to receive payment.</p> <p>Data are used at the state, county, and local level to complete standard reports including cost/benefit ratios (ratio of service cost to income earned) broken down by region, county, and provider. Data reports have a focus on total number of individuals receiving services, total and average wages, total and average hours worked, total and average DDD funding share, and total and average service hours or units.</p> <p>The state shares data publicly at the provider, county, and state level:  <a href="http://www.statedata.info/washington-ddd/">http://www.statedata.info/washington-ddd/</a></p>

## ACHIEVING CHANGE WHILE MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

Systemic and ongoing improvements in community based services and supports are needed to assure individuals with IDD have access to integrated employment. The success of employment first as an effective policy strategy will be determined by each state’s ability to enable stakeholders, policymakers and providers to understand individual integrated employment is the optimum method to ensure that individuals with IDD live lives that are free from segregation and poverty. Success in implementing employment first will require collaborative leadership with a sustained long-term focus on aligning system elements as identified in the High Performing States model to truly achieve an increase in the number of people with IDD employed in individual jobs in their community. Without this, depth and breadth of systemic changes the concept of employment first risks becoming a missed opportunity for ensuring true equality and inclusion for adults with IDD.

While the overwhelming majority of specific employment first efforts are relatively new, there are examples of states that have stumbled when implementing past integrated employment initiatives because they did not anticipate unintended consequences of the changes being made. These experiences provide cautionary examples of the challenges of implementing actions leading to long term systems change. Table 11 provides examples from nine states. Information in Table 11 comes from research and technical assistance activities conducted by the ICI and the SELN.

**Table 11: Challenges to sustaining change efforts**

State	Description of state action	Challenges to action leading to change
DE	Payment rates for supported employment services were at one point the highest per unit of service in the nation and intended to improve employment outcomes.	An examination revealed that payment rates were not based on actual costs and service expectations regarding individual integrated employment. Rates were not fiscally sustainable and did not increase expected outcomes.
FL	Vocational Rehabilitation and state Medicaid authority have a Memorandum of Understanding in place for integrated employment but the agreement does not include the Developmental Disability or Education agencies.	Little change has been seen in state agencies braiding support efforts or in actual employment outcomes for people with IDD.
IA	A major investment was made in training of provider level staff to deliver best practice and competent employment services.	The state infrastructure, particularly the funding model to deliver employment services, did not provide reimbursement rates sufficient to allow direct employment staff to incorporate practices they had learned into training they provided.
MD	Post eligibly treatment of earned income under the approved Medicaid waiver requires all earned income to be collected to cover cost of care for anyone receiving residential services	This policy is a disincentive to employment for those receiving residential services.
NJ	IDD agency planned change to approved Medicaid waiver to discontinue allowing prevocational services to be provided in sheltered workshops.	Limited outreach to stakeholder community prior to the change created confusion and lead to misperceptions regarding the changes that were to take place. A strong lobbying effort with the state legislature resulted in the diversion of DD operating budget funds, intended to build provider capacity to deliver better and more integrated employment services, to the state VR budget to continue funding services in sheltered workshops
PA	Developed a supplement to the individual service plan to prioritize integrated employment as an outcome of services.	Sustained focus on implementation of system improvements waned with multiple changes in leadership. The employment supplement became an additional burden in case management caseload rather than integrated employment becoming a priority

State	Description of state action	Challenges to action leading to change
	Designated state funds for multiple years for supported employment.	<p>outcome as intended.</p> <p>Performance standards were not maintained or tracked to assure that resources provided to build capacity and expand employment services were used effectively. As a result, no measureable outcomes could be linked back to the employment service funding.</p>
SD	State IDD agency Mission Statement: “To ensure that people with developmental disabilities have equal opportunities and receive the services and supports they need to live and work in South Dakota communities.”	While the state’s Mission Statement identifies work as an important outcome, in practice the lack of information on integrated employment opportunities, alternatives and benefits has hampered the ability of individuals and their support teams to make informed choices about work.
TN	In 2003, Tennessee became the first state in the country to adopt an Employment First policy. This initiative’s broad goal was to increase employment of individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities by 25%. The state IDD agency tracked individual employment outcomes and interest in employment.	The employment first policy initially brought about an increase in the percentage of individuals working in the community. However, the lack of contractual expectations requiring providers to assist eligible individuals in obtaining and maintaining employment and to increase the number of people supported in community jobs has prevented the expansion of the initiative. Data indicates that there are still a significant number of providers in the state that do not support any individuals in integrated employment.

## IMPROVING EMPLOYMENT FIRST ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES IN ARIZONA

Arizona has been working for many years to improve employment outcomes for individuals with IDD through its membership in the SELN and other initiatives. However, the proportion of individuals with IDD receiving integrated employment supports remains relatively small, 19% in 2011 compared with the national average of 19.3% (Butterworth et al., 2012). A formally adopted and implemented employment first initiative could effectively support and maximize the training and technical

---

assistance provided by the SELN and other initiatives. Employment first strategies designed to align public resources and build system capacity could have a significant impact on the demand for individual integrated employment and the ability of the state to prioritize work as the preferred outcome of all services provided to individuals with IDD. It is important to note, however, that successful employment first initiatives require significant systems change and a long-term commitment to providing the time and resources necessary to ensure the process is implemented as planned. It is essential that provider agencies, advocates and other stakeholders receive the technical assistance, support and direction that they need to become true partners in the state's efforts to improve employment outcomes among all people receiving support. It is recommended that stakeholders and policymakers examine the following issues related to the adoption of a formal initiative. All recommendations are of equal priority:

- The extent to which there is a shared culture and understanding of the principles of supported employment: that everyone with IDD can work in an individual integrated job when provided the supports they need and that the readiness model of employment segregates people with IDD and relegates them to a life of poverty. What do stakeholders need to do to help create and sustain this shared culture? How can employment first be structured to support this type of culture?
- The extent to which there is collaborative leadership across state agencies and departments to embrace individual integrated employment as a pathway to financial independence and community inclusion. What do stakeholders need to do to support collaborative leadership? How can employment first be structured to support this type of leadership?
- The extent to which there are resources (funds, staff, organizations, facilities, knowledge, etc.) that can be used to support individuals to become employed within the general workforce earning living wages? What do stakeholders need to do to make use of these resources? Are there resources that can be reallocated from other services? Are there new resources that will need to be developed? How can employment first be structured to support the use of all available resources to better employment outcomes?
- How will stakeholders know when the goal of employment first has been achieved?
- How will families be supported as their sons and daughters who live at home become employed in jobs integrated within the local labor market?

The responses to these questions will be a valuable tool in working with your state partners to develop, adopt, and implement Employment First in Arizona and answering these questions should be a first step in developing an employment first initiative.

---

## REFERENCES

- Butterworth, J., Hall, A., Smith, F., Migliore, A. Winsor, J., Domin, D., and Sulewski, J. (2013). *StateData: The National Report on Employment Services and Outcomes* (2012 data). Boston. University of Massachusetts Boston, Institute for Community Inclusion.
- Domin, D. & Butterworth, J. (2012). *The 2012-2011 National Community Rehabilitation Providers. Report 1: Overview of Services, Trends, and Provider Characteristics*. Research to Practice Brief. Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Boston, Institute for Community Inclusion.
- Hall, A.C., Butterworth, J., Winsor, J., Gilmore, D., and Metzger, D. (2007). "Pushing the Employment Agenda: Case Study Research of High Performing States in Integrated Employment. *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities* v43 n3 182-198.AAIDD.
- Hoff, D. (2013). *Employment First Resource List* . State Employment Leadership Network. Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Boston, Institute for Community Inclusion. Revised May 2013.
- Mann, C. (2011). *Updates to the §1915 (c) Waiver Instructions and Technical Guide regarding employment and employment related services*. CMCS Informational Bulletin Department Health and Human Services Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Baltimore, Maryland 21244-1850.
- Moseley, C. (2009). *Workers First*. National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services Inc., Alexandria VA. Retrieved August 1, 2013 from: [http://www.nasddds.org/Publications/special\\_pubs.shtml](http://www.nasddds.org/Publications/special_pubs.shtml).
- National Core Indicators. (2012). *Using National Core Indicators (NCI) data for quality improvement initiatives*. National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services and Human Services Research Institute. Retrieved from <http://www.nationalcoreindicators.org>
- Walsh, F. (2011). *Normal family process: Growing diversity and complexity*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.