

Employment First in Michigan

Mission & Principles

Adopted by the Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council 08-13-2013

Employment First in Michigan is a declaration of both philosophy and policy stating that *individual integrated employment is the first priority and preferred outcome of people with disabilities.*

Mission: The mission of Employment First in Michigan is to establish the expectation and promote opportunities for *all* working-age citizens with disabilities in Michigan to gain individual integrated employment and to engage businesses to value the contributions that employees with disabilities bring to their organizations. Individuals with disabilities in the workforce promote diversity, increase talent in the field, expand the tax base, and lower poverty rates. As such, achieving this mission will enhance the employment landscape to enable Michigan to compete with other states to bring in high-demand businesses and jobs.

Principles of Employment First in Michigan:

1. Individual integrated employment is the first and preferred outcome for individuals with disabilities, regardless of level or type of disability:
 - a. Individual means individual, not a group as in an enclave
 - b. Integrated means alongside individuals without disabilities
 - c. Employment means a job available in the general workforce and in which the employee is included on the payroll of the business or industry or is a self-employed business owner.
2. Employees with disabilities are compensated at or above the minimum wage, but not less than the customary wage and level of benefits paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by individuals without disabilities.
3. Employees with disabilities have the right to accommodations as necessary to achieve and maintain employment with a focus on the use of natural occurring supports.
4. Employment services:
 - a. are developed using processes that align with the principles of person-centered planning, self-determination, and informed choice based on the individual's talents, skills and interests;
 - b. are provided in the amount, duration, and intensity that allow persons with I/DD to work the maximum number of hours consistent with their abilities in an integrated employment setting;
 - c. may include career exploration, job discovery and development, job carving, job coaching, job training, benefits counseling, personal care services, and job customization.
5. Implementation of Employment First must be based on clear public policies and practices that ensure employment opportunities of individuals with disabilities within the general workforce and is the priority for public funding and service delivery.