

# ***Employment First in Michigan***

## **Mission & Principles**

**Michigan Autism Council 02/28/2014**

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

**Preamble:** Work is a valued activity for both the individual and society.

- For the individual, work results in tangible benefits (pay to enhance independence and economic self-sufficiency) and intangible benefits (provides purpose, dignity, self-esteem, and a sense of accomplishment and pride) and promotes inclusion in other community activities.
- For society, a diverse workforce enriches local communities and enhances economic development.

**Mission:** The mission of Employment First in Michigan is to establish the expectation and promote opportunities for *all* working-age individuals with disabilities in Michigan to gain individual integrated employment, with or without supports, and to engage businesses and organizations that value the contributions of employees with disabilities.

**Purpose:** To promote the dignity, self esteem and economic self sufficiency of working-age individuals with disabilities by providing access to meaningful and productive paid employment.

### **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 an individual person
  - 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, industry or staffing agency or is a self-employed business owner.
  - d. 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.
2. 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 interests, skills, abilities, and talents.
  - b. are provided in the amount, duration, and intensity that allow persons with disabilities 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.
  - d. may include an array of employment services and outcomes tailored to the individual's interests, strengths, abilities, and needs.
3. 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.