

## Establishing a National Employment First Agenda

Making employment the first and preferred outcome for people with disabilities.

### The Perfect Storm

- Low employment participation rate (21%)
- Forecasted labor shortages
- Shrinking public funding
- Public policy reforms
- Changing attitudes about disability and employment
- Emerging technologies
- Evidence-based research on SE/CE practices

### Values Statement

“We need everyone in the workforce for business to thrive and communities to prosper.”

### Core Values

- People with significant disabilities should have the right to enjoy their lives as much as their peers do.
- Working is fundamental to adulthood, quality of life issues, and earning the means to exercise our freedoms and choices as citizens.

### Building an Employment First Coalition

“Think globally – act locally.”

### Building an Employment First Coalition

Build a Coalition of “the Willing.”

### Building an Employment First Coalition

Make sure the Employment First bus leaves the station.

### Building an Employment First Coalition

Build on communities.

### Building an Employment First Coalition

Engage the “real” business community.

### Building an Employment First Coalition

Create effective partnerships with the schools.

### Building an Employment First Coalition

Clarify “Employment,”  
and  
“Employment First.”

### Employment First

- Means expecting, encouraging, providing, creating, and rewarding integrated employment in the workforce;
- at minimum or competitive wages and benefits;

- as the first and preferred outcome for working-age youth and adults with disabilities;
- especially those with complex and significant disabilities, for whom job placement in the past has been limited, or has not traditionally occurred.

#### Integrated Employment

- Regular employment in the workforce on the payroll of a company (unless self-employed) at minimum or prevailing wages and benefits.
- Employment where integration and interaction with co-workers without disabilities and customers is assured.
- In other words: Real Jobs, Real Wages, Real Businesses. One person at-a-time.

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Distinguish between “Qualified,” and “Quality” employees.

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Emphasize real systems change policies.

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Everybody  
Means  
Everybody!

#### Building an Employment First Coalition

Focus on the positives.

#### Building an Employment First Coalition

Invest in community support systems that promote employment.

#### Building an Employment First Coalition

Focus on strengths-based practices.

#### Building an Employment First Coalition

Invest in new technologies and training in individualized, strengths-based employment.

#### Building an Employment First Coalition

The Employment First movement is not a one-time event.

#### Building an Employment First Coalition

Sustaining momentum is critical.

#### Building an Employment First Coalition

Communicate, communicate, and then communicate some more.

#### Building an Employment First Coalition

Measure and evaluate progress.

## Accomplishments

- Two employment first summits held with key stakeholders
- One employment & disability conference held
- Two published reports—a blueprint for change and a progress report
- Mini-summit with state agency leaders
- Mini-summit with business leaders
- National white paper written
- Led to funding and launch of MNTAT
- Led to funding and launch of MEPI

## What's Next?

- Goal: To make employment the first and preferred outcome for Minnesotans with disabilities
- Will hold Employment First Summit with parents and family members on May 1, 2010.
- Employment and Disability Conference will be held in November, 2010 (MNTAT/MEPI).
- Launch and support of 5 Community Action Teams (CATs) to increase CE practices (MNTAT)
- 13 listening sessions with stakeholders are being conducted to secure recommendations on employment and disability policy development (MEPI)
- Forming coalitions with other groups interested in shared goals of integrated employment

## Employment First

- If employment is first, then what's next?
- The answer is: "Everything."
- Employment First is about raising expectations and improving practices.
- It's about applying the same set of standards, responsibilities and expectations to people with disabilities that are applied to all working age adults.

## Building an Employment First Coalition

We have only just begun.