

Employment Position Statement

The Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities supports the state's Employment First law and policy that earning a living wage through competitive employment in the general workforce is the priority and preferred outcome for working-age individuals with disabilities who receive public benefits. People with disabilities have the right to meaningful employment at competitive wages that includes job training, and opportunities for career growth and enhancement. Employment opportunities in the community should be readily available to people with disabilities without discrimination or segregation.

Through employment, people with disabilities gain an important point of entry into their communities, a sense of being valued, earned wages, job benefits and an opportunity to make a meaningful contribution. With both tangible and intangible rewards from employment, people with disabilities achieve greater independence and freedom from public support service systems.

The Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities supports the position that:

- State agencies should work together to implement policies to enact the state's Employment First law and policy.
- State agencies should work together to ensure that students with disabilities receive a strong social, emotional and academic K-12 educational foundation based on person centered planning that supports each student's transition into higher education or a career after graduation. High school education must provide a range of choices in career preparation such as vocational training, career and technology education, preparation for higher education and opportunities for competitive integrated employment.
- Transition plans should identify and fully support individualized, meaningful goals that reflect each student's highest potential and preferences.
- People with disabilities have the right to self-determination in establishing their career path, career goals, job placement or self-employment options, retention, advancement, and retirement plans. People with disabilities who depend on public benefits for health care and long-term services and supports should be able to participate in employment without losing these supports.
- People with disabilities should have access to an array of individualized, flexible and coordinated support services including assistive technology, as long as necessary to obtain and keep employment.

- Employment needs of people with disabilities should be effectively addressed through a collaborative effort by businesses, professional organizations, state and local governments, and people with disabilities and their support networks.
- Entities involved in statewide employment initiatives should disseminate information about civil rights laws that protect and guarantee the rights of people with disabilities as well as resources available to support people with disabilities in the workplace, and protection from workplace bullying and abuse.
- Entities involved in statewide employment initiatives should disseminate information to employers and the business community to overcome the negative perceptions and fears of hiring people with disabilities, and to promote the benefits and incentives for hiring people with disabilities.
- Entities involved in statewide employment initiatives should assist people with disabilities to develop successful self-employment initiatives that can include micro-enterprises and other entrepreneurial ventures.

Work is a fundamental part of adult life, and for people with disabilities, taking part in working life is an essential condition to equal participation in society. Individuals with disabilities in the Texas competitive labor force have a positive financial impact on our economy, generating income that is ultimately returned in the form of tax revenues and the purchase of goods and services.

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