



Employment First Policy for New York State

October 14, 2015

Executive Order 136: Employment First Policy for New York

- Signed by Governor on September 17, 2014:
<http://www.governor.ny.gov/news/no-136-establishing-new-york-employment-first-initiative-increase-employment-new-yorkers>



Employment First Commission

- Charged with getting stakeholder input and making recommendations to the Governor regarding competitive integrated employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.
- Stakeholder input:
 - Two statewide public listening sessions
 - Verbal and written input from more than 30 advocacy, trade, and provider organizations, as well as several individuals.



Medicaid Reforms

- **Available supports and services:**
- Employment services for Medicaid recipients with intellectual and developmental disabilities
- Employment services for Medicaid recipients with behavioral health needs
- Employment disparities examined as a social determinant of health
- Medicaid Buy-In for working people with disabilities (MBI-WPD)



Medicaid Reforms

- **Employment services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities:**
- The 1915c People First waiver's comprehensive plan to increase competitive integrated employment opportunities for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities incorporates employment outcomes as part of the Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) habilitation model



Medicaid Reforms

- **Employment services for Medicaid recipients with behavioral health needs:**
- Health and recovery plans (HARPs) enhanced benefits include individual employment support services such as pre-vocational training, transitional employment support, intensive supported employment services, and ongoing supported employment services



Medicaid Reforms

- **Employment disparities as a social determinant of health:**
- The MRT social determinants of health workgroup's October 2014 report focused on employment, identifying 12 initiatives meant to expand employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities



Medicaid Reforms

- **Medicaid buy-in for working people with disabilities (MBI-WPD):**
- The MBI-WPD program extends Medicaid eligibility criteria, and has demonstrated reductions in Medicaid expenditures



New York's Employment First Policy Goals

1. Increase the employment rate of individuals with disabilities by 5%.
2. Decrease the poverty rate of individuals with disabilities by 5%.
3. Register 100 businesses as having formal policies to hire people with disabilities as part of their workforce strategy.



Employment First Commission Recommendations

1. Adopt cultural modeling
2. Energize the “demand-side” of the equation
3. Expand New York Employment Services System (NYESS)
4. Improve benefits advisement
5. Encourage participation in Medicaid Buy-In for Working People with Disabilities
6. Study and coordinate transportation
7. Further develop linkages with education
8. Create an employment first service culture
9. Support self-employment and entrepreneurship
10. Expand access to assistive technologies
11. Measure outcomes



1. Adopt Cultural Modeling

- Model employment of individuals with disabilities at state agencies and funded community-based organizations
- Promote Section 55-b of the New York State Civil Service Law opportunities
 - Including individuals in 55-b positions on canvassing lists may increase participation
 - Reinstatement of the statewide 55-b coordinator can provide program leadership



2. Energize the “Demand-Side” of the Equation

- Redesign and reinvigorate the New York Business Leadership Network to:
 - Engage 100 business partners in adopting formal policies to hire people with disabilities
 - Champion the “business first” platform
 - Promote hiring individuals with disabilities
 - Advise other businesses on available incentives like Work Opportunity Tax Credit, the Workers with Disabilities Employment Tax Credit, and the Developmental Disabilities Tax Credit



2. Energize the “Demand-Side” of the Equation

- Expand the Developmental Disabilities Tax Credit to include all disabilities
- Promote state and federal policy supporting hiring individuals with disabilities
- Encourage and support businesses pursuing federal contracting opportunities that require a 7% hiring rate for individuals with disabilities
- Build on Minority Women Owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) policies to include individuals with disabilities



2. Energize the “Demand-Side” of the Equation

- Work with regional economic development councils (REDCs) to infuse opportunities for individuals with disabilities in economic development plans
- Require businesses working with REDCs to employ people representative of the community in which they operate, including those with disabilities



3. Expand New York Employment Services System (NYESS)

- Utilize NYESS across state agencies to provide employment supports to people with disabilities and to allow data collection and exchange
- Maximize federal funding through Ticket to Work program, and use enhanced funding to further support Employment First initiatives



4. Improve Benefits Advisement

- Enhance benefits advisement capacity and provide life coaching to all individuals with disabilities seeking economic self-sufficiency
 - Over the next three years, NYESS, in partnership with DDPC, will be developing an interactive web-based platform that will provide accurate, up-to-date information and benefits calculators
- Life coaches and/or community organizations could earn outcome based payments, similar to the TTW program, but funded via Medicaid instead of through SSA. The expense to the Medicaid program is anticipated to be offset by savings related to the decrease in Medicaid usage
- Explore cost benefit of Medicaid funding for employment coaching and benefits advisement



5. Encourage Participation in Medicaid Buy-In for Working People with Disabilities

- Streamline and standardize MBI-WPD enrollment process
- State takeover of Medicaid administration of the Medicaid program from local districts, which will centralize and create consistency in determinations
- Integrate MBI-WPD into the online New York State of Health application portal, automating eligibility determinations and referring applicants who require additional assistance to the state enrollment assistance center



6. Study and Coordinate Transportation

- Convene cross-agency taskforce to explore transportation needs and options for individuals with disabilities
- Pursue a rural transportation tax credit for employers providing resources or direct transportation to employees
- Learn mobility transportation project funded in SFY15-16



7. Further Develop Linkages with Education

- Support schools assisting students in understanding their disability, accepting responsibility for their own success, accessing appropriate preparatory curriculum, and learning time management skills and computer skills
- Involve students in the community life PROMISE research initiative testing the impact of early employment supports and significant family involvement
- Implement a “school of choice” option for students with disabilities and their families to choose schools to achieve degrees recognized and valued by post-secondary educational institutions and employers



7. Further Develop Linkages with Education

- Revisit credentials/diplomas in New York State to include a recognized “portfolio-based” option for degree completion
- Increase access to school guidance counselors and/or transition coordinators who are trained to provide career planning supports to students with disabilities seeking higher education, employment, or job skills training.
- Develop peer modeling to provide real-life context and support planning process



8. Create an Employment First Service Culture

- Build on OPWDD, ACCES-VR, and OMH evidence-based employment services training, and extend trainings focused on the delivery of high quality employment services to the full spectrum of direct support professionals



9. Support Self-Employment and Entrepreneurship

- Expand ACCES-VR self-employment initiatives including entrepreneurial assistance programs and/or small business development centers.
- Support a localized incubator model to foster program growth



10. Expand Access to Assistive Technologies

- Increase access to assistive technologies through a strategic partnership with ACCES-VR, OTDA, and TRAIID to expand inventory of employment-related devices and increase training on the use of such devices



11. Measure Outcomes

- Use NYESS to compare Medicaid wage data to measure changes to employment and poverty rates of people with disabilities in New York
- Engage external academic body to review ongoing progress toward attainment of projected goals
- Task Most Integrated Setting Coordinating Council's (MISCC) employment subcommittee with overall performance tracking and coordinating implementation

