

The New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities Position Statement on Employment

Position

People with I/DD should have individualized supports to enable them to find and keep community jobs based on their preferences, interests, and strengths, work alongside people without disabilities, receive comparable wages, and be free from workplace discrimination.¹

The NJCDD recommends that the State take the following steps to effectively address the serious issues affecting unemployment for individuals with disabilities:

1. Vigorously enforce existing anti-discrimination laws
2. Effectively implement New Jersey's Employment First policy, by adopting the definition of employment as community-integrated paid employment with wages equal to or higher than the minimum wage
3. Engage and educate families, educators, service providers, and employers to ensure that individuals with I/DD develop real job skills and are prepared to seek, gain, and maintain meaningful integrated competitive employment that matches their strengths and interests
4. Ensure quality and responsiveness by monitoring the effectiveness of its service system to ensure it meets quality standards. Specifically, the State should regularly measure and report the extent to which services result in outcomes that successfully accommodate the individual's unique needs and match the person's preferences, strengths, and interests. Moreover, the State should ensure, through agency coordination, that effective services and supports remain available as long as the person needs them to maintain successful employment.

Background

A majority of individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (I/DD) are either unemployed or underemployed, despite their abilities, desire and willingness to work. This is true for our state and nation. Too often, unemployment is tragically accepted as an inevitable result of living with I/DD.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), "...the employment of people with disabilities is seen not only as a civil rights issue, but also as a practical boon for businesses, government budgets and citizens. Employing people with disabilities has been shown to benefit businesses. In addition, increasing job opportunities for people with disabilities 'saves the federal and state government money by reducing dependency on cash and medical and disability benefits,' per the (2018) Employer Assistance and Resource Network (EARN) . For people with disabilities, employment means greater economic self-sufficiency, an opportunity to use their skills, and more active participation in community life."²

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¹ Joint Statement of The Arc with the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD), Employment Position Statement, 2012

² <http://www.askearn.org/>