



Principles of Employment For People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

New Jersey became an Employment First State, as announced by Governor Christie, on April 19, 2012.

Employment First initiatives provide a fundamental change in philosophy, policy, and expectations related to employment of people with disabilities. For New Jersey to meet the raised expectations associated with being an Employment First State, it is essential that we embrace the following principles:

1. Competitive employment in the general workforce is the **first** and **preferred** post education outcome for people with any type of disability.
2. People are “ready” to work as soon as they express an interest in doing so. The Supported Employment process should start soon after a person expresses this interest in working.
3. It is presumed that all people with disabilities can and should work. Instead of being asked to prove their employment worth, working age people with disabilities – like their peers without disabilities – will have to “opt out” of employment rather than “opt in.”
4. Supported Employment is defined as competitive (minimum wage or above) work in integrated work settings for persons with the most severe disabilities.
5. All Supported Employment services must utilize a Person-Centered Approach that acknowledges the individuals’ skills, abilities, needs, wants, and potential barriers to achieving competitive employment.
6. Vocational assessments provide the most detailed, accurate, and informative results when they are conducted at real job sites in the community. Community-Based Vocational Assessments (also known as Situational Assessments) are the preferred method of measuring a job seeker with a disability’s ability to perform on a job site.
7. Supported Employment relies on the place and train model (on-the-job training) as the preferred method for people with disabilities to learn their jobs and gain employment skills. Post-secondary education and vocational training in the skills and competencies necessary to work in specific industries is also encouraged.
8. All job supports will be ongoing, as needed, and based on the individual.
9. The Supported Employment process must be a collaborative effort led by the individual and supported by their network of stakeholders.
10. Benefits and additional services/supports are the safety net that supplements competitive employment, not the other way around.