Mill Levy Advisory Council  
Employment Background

**Discovery goals**

Investigating the following topics and questions based on available data and resources:

- Summarize recent (2019) legislation as it relates to employment for persons with disabilities.
- Summarize the 2019 DVR priorities of Employment First.
- What services in Denver currently exist for IDD community members to connect with employment opportunities?

**Legislation Summary & Background**

**Employment First Model:** “A framework for change in the provisions of services that is centered on the premise that all persons, including persons with significant disabilities, are capable of full participation in competitive integrated employment and community life. Under this framework, in providing publicly funded services, employment in the general workforce is the first and preferred outcome for all working-age persons with disabilities, regardless of the level of disability. Publicly funded agencies and systems align policies, service delivery practices, funding, and reimbursement structures in order to achieve competitive integrated employment.”

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**SB16-077 Employment First For Persons with Disabilities**

 Specifies five (5) agency partners that must work together to identify employment and educational opportunities for persons with disabilities:

- Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE)
- Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (DCPF)
- Department of Education (CDE)
- Department of Higher Education (DHE)
- Department of Human Services (DHS)

The bill created the Employment First Advisory Partnership with the following entities (all within CDLE):

- State Rehabilitation Council (lead agency)
- Colorado Workforce Development Council
- Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program Core State Advisory Group

Duties include:

- Develop a strategic plan to expand competitive integrated employment outcomes for persons with IDD through employment first policies and practices.

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1 Colorado Senate Bill 16-077
• Make recommendations to ensure that competitive integrated employment is the primary objective and preferred outcome for all working-age persons with disabilities.
• Identify barriers to employment opportunities for persons with IDD including unnecessary, inefficient, or conflicting agency rules and regulations.
• Identify training and knowledge gaps among agency staff, vendors, and individuals with disabilities and their families.

**SB18-145 Implement Employment First Recommendations**
Implements recommendations from the 2017 Employment First Advisory Partnership initial report on its strategic plan.

Recommendations Include:

- Require training or certification of all providers of supported employment services for persons with disabilities.
- Establishing a fee for the discovery process alternative assessment tool.
- Increasing data collection efforts.

Outcomes:

- CDLE, in conjunction with the Medical Services Board in HCPF, is required to promulgate rules by July 1, 2019 requiring training or certification for certain supported employment service providers.
  o The training or certification requirement is contingent upon appropriations to HCPF to reimburse vendors of supported employment services for the cost of training and Certification and is to be completed over five (5) years.

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**2019 Employment First Advisory Partnership Committee Work Summary (Identified Priorities for 2019)**:

1. **Office of Employment First:** Create an office of employment first to implement a cross functional departmental process within EFAP agency partners to identify state policy, regulations, and practices within the five state partner agencies that present barriers to Employment First implementation and develop strategies to remove those barriers and align policy, regulation and practice between EFAP Agency Partners.
2. **Model Employer:** Support Colorado’s efforts to become a model employer for people with disabilities through:
   a. increasing the number of people with disabilities through use of a process modeled after the federal government affirmative action program in response to section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act 1973 (goals of having 12% of its workforce be people with disabilities.

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2 Colorado State Rehabilitation Council’s 2019 Annual Report, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
b. 2% be with targeted disabilities).
c. consider implementation of a non-competitive hiring process modeled after the federal “Schedule A” hiring authority for people with “an intellectual disability, severe physical disability, or psychiatric disability.

3. **Benefits Planning:** Increase access to high quality benefits planning through cross-departmental collaboration to produce initiatives such as Disability Benefits 101 (an online benefits calculator) and increase Community Work Incentives Coordinator availability.

4. **System Capacity Expansion:** Create funding structures that allow for capacity expansion consistent with successful recruitment efforts to fill current and future staffing needs as Employment First efforts expand. Work with the Community College Systems Office, Talent FOUND Gateway, media outlets via PSAs, social media and other methods highlighting the benefits of working as an employment support professional.

5. **Family & Individual Information & Training:** Develop a plan for community-based stakeholder information and training sessions for families, youth and adults with disabilities, professionals and community members to inform them of employment first initiative for promoting best practices and to mobilize support implementation within the community.

6. **Website & Messaging:** Develop an Employment First website to provide youth, adults and families needed resources on navigating the system which would be person-centered and fully accessible, mirroring the discovery process based on the interests of individuals and families. Such a website would also be a clearing house of information for professionals and educators to access needed resources and information on Employment First efforts. Develop a professionally designed logo, fact sheet, presentation and social media platforms to create a consistent message to reach out to job seekers and families promoting the concept and value of competitive integrated employment, including benefits planning information in a variety of accessible formats.

7. **Sustainable Funding: Office of Employment First:** Obtain additional resources for the Office of Employment First through grant-writing and public/private partnerships.

8. **Sustainable Funding: DVR:** DVR Federal Match Expand matching funds for the Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) through Long Bill authorization to access the 21.3% state fund to 78.7% federal fund.

**Available Resources & Services**

**Colorado Office of Employment First (OEF), University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus:** Provides training, technical assistance, communication, coordination, and evaluation/monitoring on Employment First initiatives in Colorado.

OEF provides training on Employment first philosophy, programs, policy and practices for community partners, employers, educators, state agencies, people with disabilities, and their families.

Focus of OEF (through June 2020):

- Curriculum Development and Training
  - Development of the OEF Branding and Website
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation: Helps people with disabilities prepare for, obtain, advance in, and maintain employment.

Eligibility Requirements:

- Documentable Disability
- Disability must create problems getting, doing, keeping, or advancing in a job
- Must need DVR services in order to work successfully

The DVR Roadmap

Fig. 1: Roadmap of DVR process for obtaining employment.

Clients may be placed on a waitlist due to a lack of available resources and may be placed into an “order of selection” priority category. Individuals who have the most significant disabilities will be served before individuals with significant disabilities, and all other individuals with disabilities will be served after the first two groups.

Department of Health Care Policy & Financing, Supported Employment Program: Supports Employment First’s initiative to ensure professionals who are actively providing Individualized Supported Employment services through DVR or Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Medicaid Waivers have the training and/or certification required and can be reimbursed for that training and/or certification.

Table 1: Supported Employment Training Options for Professional Development
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Overview</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE) - Offered by Community Integrated Services (CIS)</td>
<td>DVR vendors and HCBS Medicaid Waiver Services Providers.</td>
<td>This training is conducted by peers in the nation who offer strategies, tools, and up to date information in Employment Services. This training satisfies new requirements for providers of employment services.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE) - Offered by Colorado Wise Online Academy</td>
<td>DVR vendors and HCBS Medicaid Waiver Services Providers.</td>
<td>This series will cover the ACRE basic core training areas for Employment Specialists, including:</td>
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<td>- Introduction to Supported Employment, Discovery and Person-Centered Planning - Webinar Series &amp; Online Coursework</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- Job Development and Marketing - Webinar Series &amp; Online Coursework</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- Systematic Instruction: Teaching, Learning and Retaining Jobs - Webinar Series &amp; Online Coursework</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Social Security Benefits and Work Incentives - On Demand Module &amp; Quizzes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Certified Employment Support Professional (CESP)</td>
<td>The Certified Employment Support Professional credential recognizes individuals who have demonstrated a sufficient level of knowledge and skill to provide support to people with significant disabilities to get and keep jobs that are a good match.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual Placement &amp; Support (IPS)</td>
<td>Employment Specialists who work for Mental Health Centers who have contracts with DVR and with Medicaid Regional Accountable Entities.</td>
<td>This training is conducted by professionals in Colorado and with the National IPS Center who offer strategies, tools, and up to date information in IPS tools, strategies and services.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Customized Employment</td>
<td>Targeted audience</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The trainings listed in Table 1 are nationally recognized trainings/certifications which include standards that are set and approved by relevant industry groups and/or governing bodies nationwide. Core competencies achieved through these trainings include:

- Person-centered process
- Individualized career assessment and planning
- Individualized job development
- Individualized job coaching
- Job development

Reimbursement Limits:

- Training - $1,200
- Certification - $300

**Mill Levy Funded Initiatives Related to Employment**

**Access Gallery**: An inclusive nonprofit organization that engages the community by opening doors to creative, educated and economic opportunities for people with disabilities to access, experience, and benefit from the arts.

**Laradon**: Provides individualized services to children and adults with intellectual, developmental, and other disabilities.

Individualized Employment Program:

- Customized Job Placement assistance
- Job Seeking Skills Training and Job Development
- Resume and Interview Preparation Assistance
- On-going Individualized Supported Employment

Group Employment Teams:

- 5-6 individuals/team
- Laradon provides supervision and quality assurance to employer

**Financial Health Institute**: Financial health and personal economics education provider throughout the Rocky Mountain Region.

The **More Than a Job** class is an employment readiness course that guides participants through a personal exploration process to discover meaningful employment incentives and lifelong tools that enhance personal and economic sustainability. Participants gain knowledge of their personal attributes and core economic principles to conquer employment barriers, land a job, and keep the job despite the challenging adverse climate of job competitiveness and financial pressures.
**Easterseals**: Nonprofit health care organization that provides a variety of services for Americans living with disabilities.

**Employment Development Services** include:

- *Employment Planning*: Helps job seekers with career exploration and development; information about employment opportunities within a community; and the skills, education, and training needed to meet individual employment goals.
- *Job Placement*: Helps people find and keep employment consistent with their employment goals. Examples of services include vocational counseling, job seeking skills, adaptive needs assessment, case management services, and job development.
- *School-to-Work Transition Services*: Assists youth with disabilities in their transition from school to workplace through a range of employment and education-based services. Services include academic preparation, social, life and job skills training, job exploration and development, employment, coaching, and placement.
- *Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)*: Job training and placement program that matches older workers with employers.
- *Supported Employment*: Helps individuals secure and be trained in jobs they choose while assisting employers strengthen workforce diversity. A job coach provides support during the initial job training program.

**Easterseals Colorado Increases Employment Opportunities for People with I/DD** (May 29, 2020)

**The Jovial Garden Project**: Uses a community garden to restore community, confidence, and teach practical management and workforce skills. Students with IDD are taught gardening along with valuable life skills such as cooking their own lunch.

**Ability Connection Colorado**: Provides inclusive education, pathways to employment, and statewide family support programs to create opportunities and sustainable changes for families across Colorado. **Ready to Achieve Mentoring Program (RAMP)**: Career-focused mentoring program for youth with disabilities who are currently involved with or are at risk of becoming involved with the juvenile justice system. RAMP supports successful life transitions to employment, continued learning opportunities, and independent living.

**Thrive Center**: Informs and empowers families as advocates for their children with disabilities ages birth to 26 years old. **Project Independence**: Provides trainings and all-day college visits to parents/caregivers of children and young adults with disabilities. The purpose is for parents to understand their child’s educational, developmental, and transitional needs; for youth to have the ability to self-advocate and discover what they would like to do after leaving high school.

- Employment training is a presentation on employment services and programs.

**Community Counts!**: A Diversity Partnership Program through Coaching, Training, and Transformation (CTAT) with the perspective that strengthening our community to include people with I/DD will facilitate...
inclusive opportunities for Denver residents with intellectual and developmental disabilities through curriculum design and delivery, outreach, and program consultation for organizations, businesses, and clubs in the Denver Metro area.

- “Inclusion in Employment” course for employers and potential employers of jobseekers with I/DD
  - Course will introduce businesses and employers in Denver to the Employment First vision and provide participants information about recruiting, hiring, training, and supervising employees with I/DD. In the session, panel members and participants will identify concepts, supports, and resources that may be needed for a successful company strategy to include people with I/DD in the workplace.

**Additional Information**

DCPF Memo on Supported Employment Supports and Services (Dec. 13, 2019)