



# Exploring an Innovative Employment Curriculum for Transition Age Youth and Families

February 29, 2024



**COLORADO OFFICE OF  
EMPLOYMENT FIRST**  
*— Work Elevated —*

# Today's Facilitators



**Melanie Honsbruch, CPWIC**  
Curriculum Developer/Trainer  
specializing in Benefits Counseling  
Colorado Office of Employment First  
[Melanie.Honsbruch@cuanschutz.edu](mailto:Melanie.Honsbruch@cuanschutz.edu)



**Tiffany D. Cron, PhD**  
Director of the Colorado  
Office of Employment First  
[Tiffany.Cron@cuanschutz.edu](mailto:Tiffany.Cron@cuanschutz.edu)





# Objectives

- Learn the story behind the training “A Brighter Future: Navigating the World of Disability and Employment.”
- Learn six important topics to understand when approaching youth transition to adulthood.
- Learn about resources and how to access this training.
- Get connected to future opportunities to voice your ideas on training and information that can support youth transitioning to adulthood.

# Colorado Office of Employment First (COEF)

- COEF sits under JFK Partners, the State's University Center of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD), a program of the University of Colorado School of Medicine.
- COEF's work *supports Employment First initiatives* set forth by the Employment First Advisory Partnership (EFAP) and Colorado providers.
- *Increase training and certification capacity* and support individuals with disabilities and their families to understand that *work IS possible.*
- COEF was developed to be *“Colorado's premier training and technical assistance center for Employment First initiatives and evidenced-based practice.”*

# Colorado Office of Employment First (COEF)

## Our Vision

A culture of inclusive, meaningful, and competitive employment for all people.

## Our Mission

Leading Colorado toward equitable employment for all people with disabilities through collaboration, systems innovation, and training excellence.



### Collaboration

Promoting work as part of a financially secure, healthy, and fulfilled life.



### Systems Innovation

Convening to improve policies, remove barriers, bust myths, and promote technology.



### Training Excellence

Elevating evidence-based strategies through training and learning communities.

# Colorado Office of Employment First (COEF)

- COEF is ***a cross-disability focused organization.***
- We are ***creating a common expectation & confidence*** about work and that employment leads to a financially secure, healthy and fulfilled life for all people with disabilities and their families.
- We are ***convening decision makers to improve policies*** to promote Employment First initiatives.
- Through education and awareness, we are ***elevating the delivery of effective employment services*** throughout the state with evidence-based and evidenced-informed training and ongoing learning communities.



# Youth Perspective on Employment



# Employment is for Everyone

Your life. Your goals. Real Work. Real Pay.





# A Brighter Future: Navigating the World of Disability and Employment





# Purpose/Background of the Training

**A Brighter Future: Navigating the World of Disability and Employment** was funded by the **Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council**.

The purpose of this training is to provide a statewide training curriculum to educate youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their parents and/or guardians about Employment First, about the possibilities, processes, potential services, systems navigation, and strategies for securing work.



# What was our Process?

- Determined 6 topics that promote employment conversations in transition.
- Formed a curriculum development team that included key input from a paid Youth Lead and Family Member Lead as well as subject matter experts in each topic area.
- Engaged in listening sessions with Youth and Families for discover what was important to them in each topic area.
- Developed a two-track training, one track for Youth and one track for Families/Caregivers.
- Included an activity for each topic area for users to apply information learned.
- Offer the training on demand for new and past user access



# Introductory Video of Curriculum

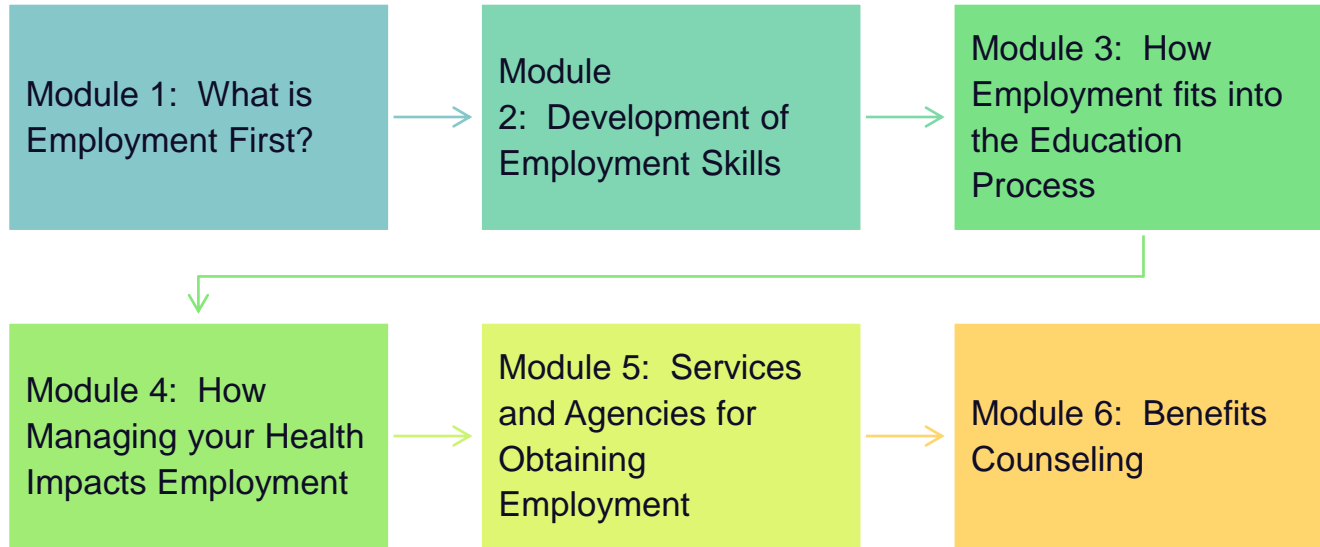


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A Brighter Future:  
Navigating the World of  
Disability and Employment



# Six Important Topics for Youth Transitioning to Adulthood



# Module 1: What is Employment First?

- Philosophy- what does Employment First mean?
  - Why is it important for youth? Why does it matter to me?
  - How should this impact my decision making or how I advocate for services?
  - Types of employment (competitive integrated employment, supported employment, customized employment, self-employment)
- The Importance of High Expectations for Employment
  - Early conversations that employment is possible
- Developing a Vision for Life After High School
  - Person-Centered Planning



# What is Employment First?

- A belief & **value** that all individuals regardless of level of disability are capable of full inclusion and working in Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE).
- It is the **first and preferred outcome**, regardless of level of disability in businesses found in the community, with regular compensation, equal advancement and equal interaction with non-disabled co-workers.
- It is critical to **create expectations** that all people can work if they want!
- Systems Change & **Culture Shift** to alleviate fears associated with working and educating employers on how to support a more diverse workforce!

# Module 1 Resources



## Colorado Office of Employment First (COEF)

- <https://employmentfirstcolorado.org/>

## Colorado Association of People Supporting Employment First (COAPSE)

- <https://apse.org/chapter/colorado/>

## Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN)

- <https://autisticadvocacy.org/policy/toolkits/employment/>

# Module 2: Development of Employment Skills

- Self-determination and Self-advocacy
- Importance of knowing oneself
  - Knowing one's strengths, interests, and abilities.
  - Talking with employers, interviewing, applications, and resumes.
- Pre-employment transition services
  - Importance of work based learning and paid employment while in high school.
  - How technology can help one get a job and help while on the job.



# Module 2 Resources



## My Colorado Journey

- <https://www.mycoloradojourney.com/>

## Soft Skills – Synopsis, Video

- <https://youtu.be/OwPArMTI9i8>

## Transition Discoveries, What is Preparing for Employment, Video

- <https://youtu.be/yur7oMI0Jjk>

# Module 3: How employment fits into the education process?

- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
  - Secondary transition services.
    - Individualized Education Program (IEP) process/504.
      - Setting appropriate and measurable IEP goals.
    - Transition planning process.
  - What is transition assessment?
    - Helpful assessments for employment related needs.
  - Employment as a goal (employment/post-secondary training options).
- Agency Connections
  - Colorado's Sequencing of Services Initiative.
  - Coordinated student led planning.

# Module 3 Resources



## National Parent Center on Transition and Employment

- <https://www.pacer.org/transition/learning-center/laws/idea.asp>

## Colorado Sequencing of Services

- <http://www.cde.state.co.us/sequencingofservices>

## Transition Discoveries: What is Transition Planning Video

- [https://youtu.be/XcIT29\\_xOd0](https://youtu.be/XcIT29_xOd0)

# Module 4: How managing your health impacts employment

- Developing health goals – why this is important for future planning and what is the connection between health and employment
- Signs of a healthy workplace and signs of a healthy you
  - People you can talk too, supportive coworkers
  - Working withing abilities
  - Strategies that support, exercise, diet, sleep, mental health, health maintenance
- Addressing potential challenges at work related to health

# Module 4 Resources



## Budget Meal Prep:

- <https://www.budgetbytes.com/category/extra-bytes/budget-friendly-meal-prep/>

## Home Workout:

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rl\\_6l992GrA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rl_6l992GrA)

## Healthy Snacks:

- <https://www.easybudgetmeals.com/25-cheap-healthy-snacks/>

# Module 5: Services and Agencies for obtaining employment?

- How do these services and agencies support employment
- Specific connections to resources that support employment (i.e. Youth Leadership Forum)
  - Centers for Independent Living (CIL)
  - Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)
  - Guidance Counselors
  - Community Center Boards (aka: Case Management Agencies)
  - Workforce Centers
- Importance of a support system once employed
  - Charting possible supports to maximize success



# Module 5 Resources



## Youth Leadership Forum

- <https://coloradosilc.org/colorado-youth-leadership-forum/>

## Colorado Workforce Centers

- <https://cdle.colorado.gov/wfc>

## Charting the LifeCourse Integrating Supports Star

- <http://www.lifecoursetools.com/lifecourse-library/integrated-supports-star/>

# Module 6: Benefits Counseling

- How will employment impact social security benefits?
  - Basics of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)
- What is Benefits Counseling and how can a benefits counselor support you to go to work and earn more money?
- Specific guidance about how Benefits Counseling services can be accessed in Colorado
- Highlight on Colorado Disability Benefits 101 website
  - <https://co.db101.org/>



## Module 6 Resources



**Social Security Blue Book** (the medical definitions to be determined eligible for Social Security administered disability Benefits)

- <https://www.ssa.gov/disability/professionals/bluebook/AdultListings.htm>

**A Benefits Counseling Guide**

- <https://employmentfirstcolorado.org/benefits-counseling/>

**Social Security Red Book** (discusses work incentive programs available for SSI and SSDI beneficiaries)

- <https://www.ssa.gov/redbook/>



# Youth reflection after completing the curriculum



## Youth Reflection

### Lilly Roberts

- ▶ A Brighter Future:  
Navigating the World of  
Disability and Employment

## What I Liked

- Descriptions and explanations were easy to understand
- Liked the visuals and videos in the presentation
- Liked the teachers
- You could do from the comfort of your home and without sensory issue concerns
- Didn't worry about transportation
- Able to ask questions



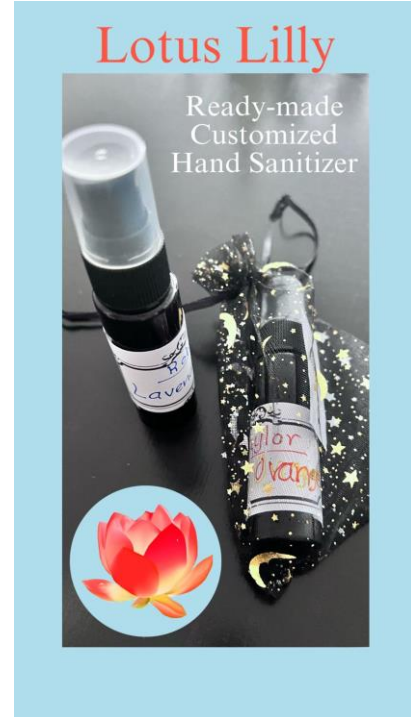
## What I Learned

- I am capable of more than what people believe
- Even with a disability I will and should get paid equally as others doing the same job
- Confidence & Courage matters: don't allow others to tell you that you can't or bring you down
- Think about what you want to do in your life then look for it



## What's Next For Me

- PEP Conference (parents encouraging parents) Self-Advocacy and Leadership skills, networking, social time
- Short-term Attending TACT exploring carpentry, electrical, and welding
- Youth Leadership One Week at Colorado State University (through Atlantis Community)
- Apply for Leadership University Special Olympics
- Part-time job
- Volunteering
- Start my own business: Customized Essential Oils Hand Sanitizer





# The Importance of High Expectations

# High Expectations

- The belief and value that **everyone has the right to work** regardless of level or significance of disability.
- Expectations can be set by anyone including family, friends, teachers, and service providers; and their expectations can **positively or negatively influence a person's vision** for themselves.



Have you ever experienced a situation where someone said something about you, and it has stuck with you forever?



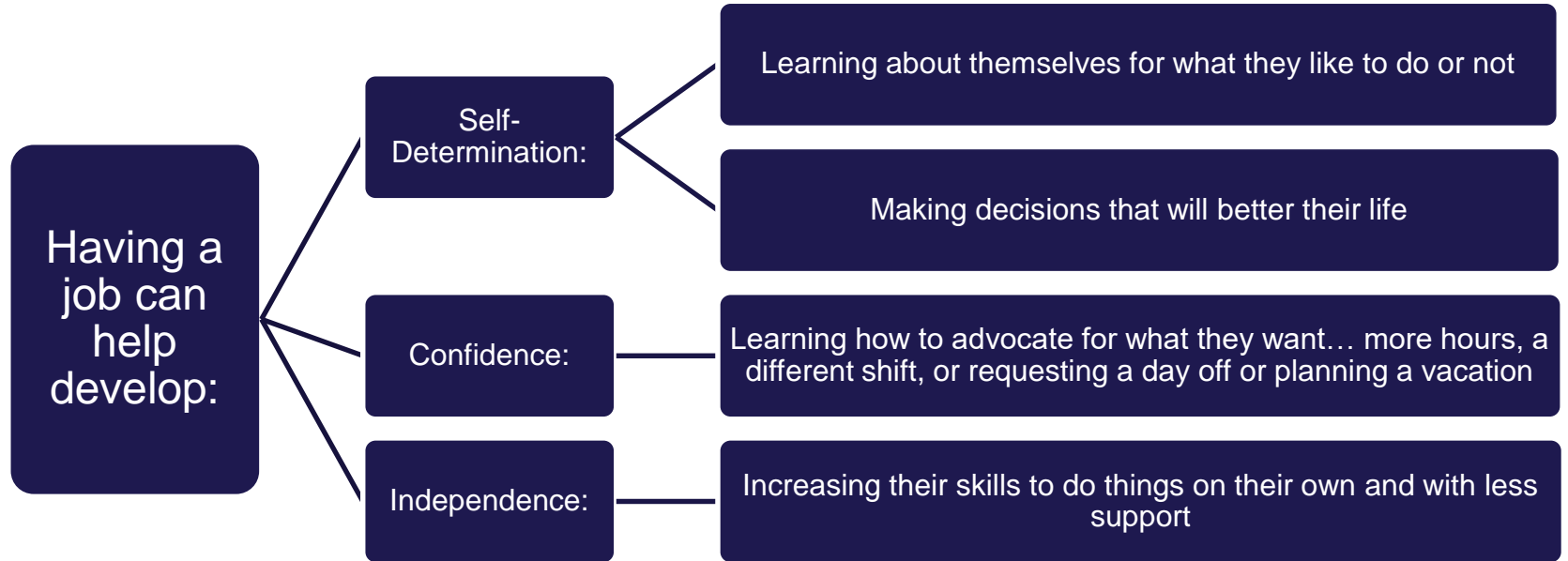
# High Expectations

With supports in place, we can promote High Expectations that include:

- Participating in household chores and responsibilities
- Contributing to team projects that include taking specific roles and leadership opportunities
- Becoming a volunteer
- Sharing often about employment dreams and interests
- Encouraging early employment experiences such as job shadowing, informational interviews, internships, etc.



# Self-Determination, Confidence, & Independence



# Parent Perspective on Employment



## Employment is for Everyone



Your life. Your goals. Real Work. Real Pay.



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# A Brighter Future: Navigating the World of Disability and Employment

Interested?  
Get Signed Up

A FREE training presented by:



## A Brighter Future: Navigating the World of Disability and Employment

MAY TRAINING DATES

### ABOUT THE TRAINING

Training participants will engage in an interactive learning experience that includes six one-hour virtual training sessions with additional one-on-one mentoring opportunities. Participants will complete a pre and post-course survey to assess knowledge gained from this training opportunity.

### TARGET AUDIENCE

Youth with I/DD between the ages of 14 and 21 and their family members primarily representing rural areas.

### TRAINING TOPICS

There are separate Youth and Family training tracks covering these topics:

- What Employment First is
- Skills needed to get employment
- How employment fits into the education process
- How managing health impacts employment
- Services and agencies for obtaining employment
- How employment may impact Social Security benefits

### YOUTH TRACK DATES

Day 1: May 8th; 4:00-5:00pm  
Day 2: May 10th; 4:00-5:00pm  
Day 3: May 15th; 4:00-5:00pm  
Day 4: May 17th; 4:00-5:00pm  
Day 5: May 22nd; 4:00-5:00pm  
Day 6: May 24th; 4:00-5:00pm

### FAMILY TRACK DATES

Day 1: May 16th; 12:00-1:00pm  
Day 2: May 17th; 12:00-1:00pm  
Day 3: May 18th; 12:00-1:00pm  
Day 4: May 23rd; 12:00-1:00pm  
Day 5: May 24th; 12:00-1:00pm  
Day 6: May 25th; 12:00-1:00pm



Scan the QR Code or visit [tinyurl.com/ekm5yjk](https://tinyurl.com/ekm5yjk) to register for the training!



Scan the QR Code or visit [tinyurl.com/26p9sxx](https://tinyurl.com/26p9sxx) to register for the training!


Visit:

<https://employmentfirstcolorado.org/youth-and-families/>

Select to Register for:

- YOUTH Training or
- FAMILY Training
- (or Both)

Watch your email for Next Steps



# Voice Your Ideas and Input on Youth Transition Topics

Topics of today and  
topics for tomorrow!

- Share Stories
- What resources and support would be helpful
- Stay up to date on Employment First in Colorado
- Learn what COEF is currently working on



# Connect with COEF



Visit our website and sign up  
for COEF communications!

<https://employmentfirstcolorado.org>



Facebook: [www.facebook.com/COEFtalk](http://www.facebook.com/COEFtalk)



Instagram: @coeftalk



LinkedIn: [www.linkedin.com/in/colorado-office-of-employment-first/](http://www.linkedin.com/in/colorado-office-of-employment-first/)



Newsletter & Communications:

[www.employmentfirstcolorado.org/contact/](http://www.employmentfirstcolorado.org/contact/)



Email Us:

[info@employmentfirstcolorado.org](mailto:info@employmentfirstcolorado.org)





# Questions



# Thank you!

