



Intro to Colorado's Employment First Initiative

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What the heck is “Employment First”

- The Association of Persons Supporting Employment First (APSE) is “the national voice of the Employment First movement.” See: www.apse.org
- **Employment in the general workforce is the first and preferred outcome in the provision of publicly funded services for all working age citizens with disabilities, regardless of level of disability.**
- The current **low participation rate** of citizens with disabilities in the workforce is **unacceptable.**
- Access to “real jobs with real wages” is essential if citizens with disabilities will **live a life free of poverty, dependence, and isolation.**

Employment First: what the...?

- It is presumed that **ALL working age adults and youths with disabilities can work in jobs** fully integrated within the general workforce, working side-by-side with co-workers without disabilities, earning minimum wage or higher.
- As with all other individuals, **employees with disabilities require assistance and support to ensure job success** and should have access to those supports necessary to succeed in the workplace.
- Colorado's initiative began with **SB16-077: "Employment First for Persons with Disabilities"**

SB16-077 Philosophical underpinnings

- The value of work for all of us is obvious.
- Structural barriers for job seekers with IDD results in 85% under and unemployment.
- The legislative proposal: develop state policy promoting best-practice employment supports and outcomes for all people with disabilities.
- Olmstead compliance was emphasized as was guidance within the recently passed WIOA and the CMS Final Settings Rule.

The right to integrated employment: Established by the ADA & Olmstead Ruling

- People utilizing services through state and local government have the right to be employed in:
“the most integrated setting”
- This is the law of the land.
- Most states (including CO) are presently in violation when it comes to state-funded employment services.
- The time for change is **NOW!**



What's "CIE?"

- Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) is work paid directly by employers at the regular wage;
- With commensurate benefits;
- In a typical setting where the employee has the opportunity to interact continuously with coworkers without disabilities, (not including service providers);
- With opportunities for advancement/job mobility;
- Preferably in full time work.

SB16-077 established the EFAP

- Established the Employment First Advisory Partnership (EFAP) to “develop a strategic plan to expand CIE outcomes for PWD through EF policies and practices.”
- Required that five state departments (CDE, CDHE, CDHS, CDLE & HCPF) “provide input and assistance to the EFAP.”
- Further defined EFAP membership to include community stakeholders.
- After plan submission to the 2018 General Assembly, the EFAP was directed to continue to meet to provide revisions to and implementation of the plan.

Employment First in Colorado

Employment
First
Legislation
SB16-077
Passed.

2016



EFAP
Strategic
Plan
submitted to
Legislature &
SB18-145
passed.

2018



Office of
Employment
First
established.
SMW and EFAP
reauth. bills
introduced

2020

2017

Employment
First Advisory
Partnership
Established
(EFAP).



2019

Legislature
approved
budget
appropriation
to develop
Office of
Employment
First.



EFAP Strategic Plan Recommendations

1. Produce data that measures CO compliance with Olmstead.
2. Implement department-wide Employment First policies and practices.
3. Implement an evidence-based training for state service providers.
4. Implement a communication plan targeting employers, educators, PWD and families.

EFAP Strategic Plan

Recommendations

5. Create an Office of Employment First to implement Employment First policies and practices.
6. Develop appropriate funding structures that will increase employment service capacity.
7. Design and coordinate best-practice pilot projects.
8. Become a "model employer" for Colorado citizens with disabilities (Colorado).

SB18-145 “Implement Employment First Recommendations”

- Requires well-trained/certified employment support professionals in DVR & HCPF (*EFAP recommendation #3*).
- Requires DVR to pay for “Discovery” a customized employment-based assessment.
- Requires HCPF to collect comprehensive employment and day service data to document Olmstead compliance (*EFAP recommendation #1*).

2019 EF Appropriation

- Created the Colorado Office of Employment First (*EFAP recommendations #4 & #5*).
- Added 4 positions to DVR on benefits-planning, state staff training, state as model employer and IPS (*EFAP recommendation #8*).
- Expanded the Customized Employment Pilot statewide (*EFAP recommendation # 7*).
- Established a HCPF outcome-based rate incentive pilot (EFAP recommendation #6).

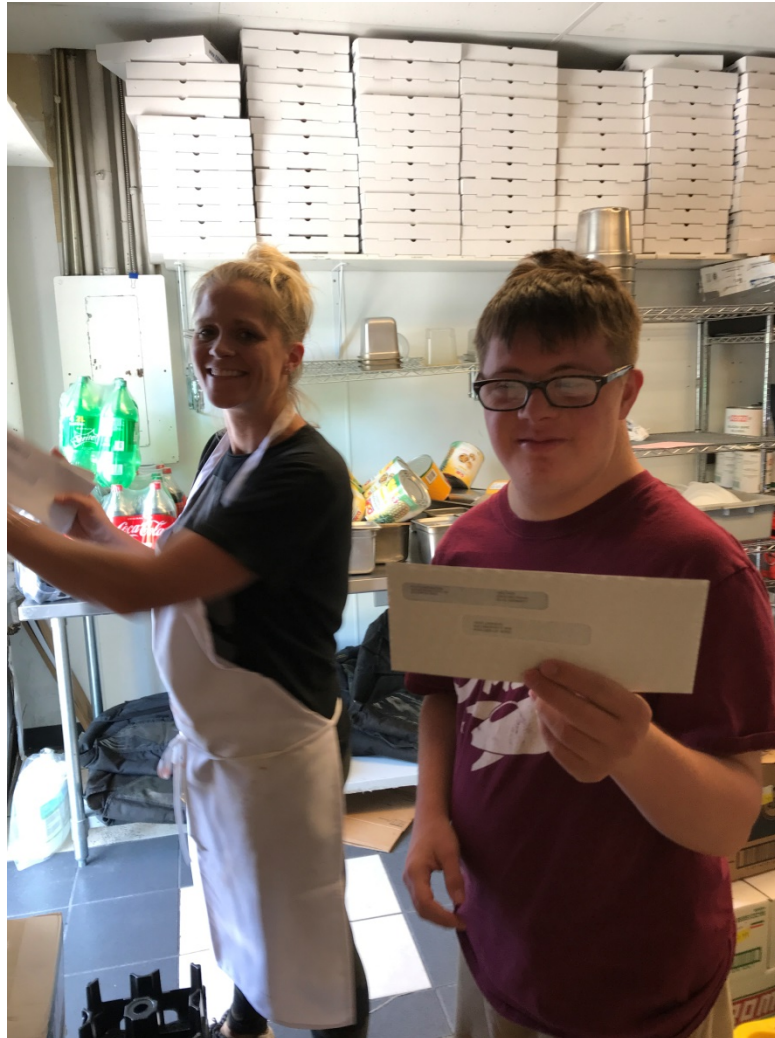
What's “Customized Employment”

- **Customized Employment** is a flexible process designed to **personalize the employment relationship** between a job candidate or employee and an employer in a way that **meets the needs of both**. It is based on identifying the strengths, conditions, and interests of a job candidate or employee through a process of discovery.
- **Who** does it benefit???

**An employee of Cosmos Pizza who
takes pride in a job well done...**



**...who appreciates the independence
a pay check brings...**



**...and who enjoys
a free slice after every shift!**



2020 pending EF-related legislation

- HB20-1263 “Eliminate Sub-minimum Wage Employment” would have required a **four year phase out of sub-minimum wage** practices in Colorado (impacting approximately 500 people).
- **Also created HCBS services** for people with IDD for career exploration, constant site monitoring (only as needed), ongoing benefits counseling, access to the Medicaid Buy-In program & EFAP funding analysis (*consistent with EFAP recommendation #6*).
- “EFAP Reauthorization” (not introduced) would have **continued EFAP** for an additional five years.

“The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision.” -Hellen Keller



While we have envisioned a future of real work for real pay for all Colorado citizens, the realization of that future will require considerable focus from each of us.