



Employment First

A Service Delivery Evolution

Presented by the Colorado Office of Employment First



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Colorado Office of Employment First (COEF)

Our Vision

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

Our Mission

Elevating equitable employment in Colorado 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.



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Objectives

- 1. Review the History of Disability Employment**
- 2. Define Employment First and Competitive Integrated Employment**
- 3. Recognize Why Employment First is Important**
- 4. Outline the Benefits of Inclusion**
- 5. Embrace the Power of High Expectations**
- 6. Overview of Services and Supports**
- 7. Learn About Provider Transformation in Colorado**



History of Disability Employment



Is All Employment the Same? What do you already know about employment for people with disabilities?



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Employment in the Past



- Provide training, skill building, experience.
- Temporary
- Intention to move into competitive employment.

- Use existing abilities.
- Long-term permanent placements.
- Segregated workshop setting.

These are all employment settings that we are leaving behind!



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Why Leave Segregated Employment Behind?

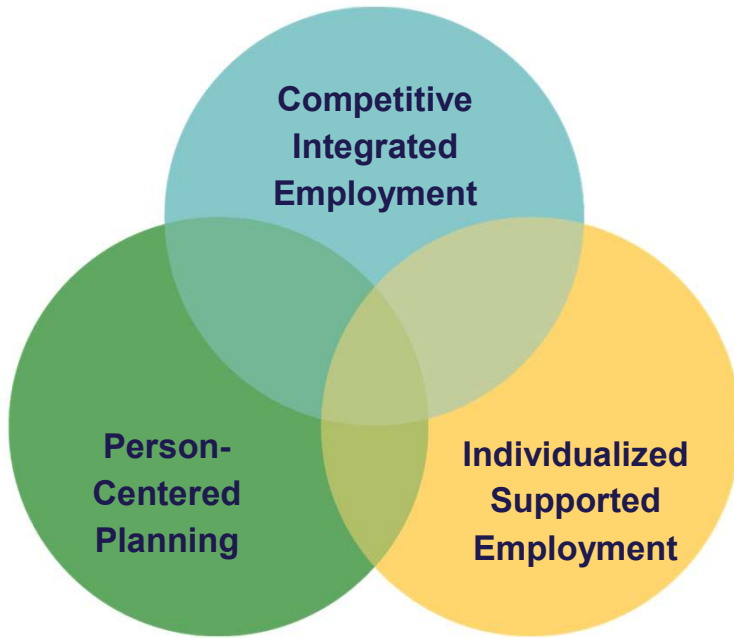
Research has provided evidence against sheltered employment:

- Sheltered employment settings fail to provide people **meaningful employment outcomes**. (Bellamy, Rhodes, Bourbeau, & Mank, 1986).
- Sheltered employment programs unnecessarily isolate people from the rest of their community, contributing to lowered expectations and negative public attitudes (Wehman, 1981).
- Very few people are able to progress into **competitive integrated employment** (Murphy & Rogan, 1995).



What is Employment First?





Inclusive Employment is Now.

Inclusive Employment is the Future.



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Employment is For Everyone

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



What is Employment First?



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What is Employment First?

- Employment First is an **unwavering belief** that all people have valuable contributions to offer the workforce, regardless of the type or significance of disability, and have the right to pursue their employment goals.
- Employment First is also an effort taken on by states to **change systems and shift culture to create a reality of meaningful work for all people with disabilities**, including people with significant and complex disabilities.
- In an Employment First state, the opportunity to work for competitive wages needs to be provided as the **first and primary option** by taxpayer-funded program staff.



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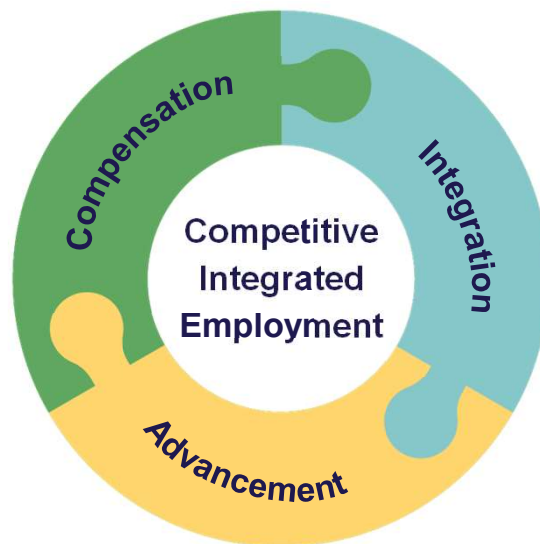
Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE)

Compensation

Pay at or above the local minimum wage or the customary rate for similar occupations for the same employer.

Advancement

Opportunities to advance and be promoted, just like any one else.



Integration

Workplace and culture where the employee works alongside other employees who do not have disabilities. Experiences authentic inclusion and belonging.



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What Employment First is Not

Charity

Don't hire a person with a disability because you feel they are helpless and should be grateful to have a job at all.

Tax Incentive or Quota

Don't hire a person with a disability to get a tax break or tick a diversity box.

Pity

Don't hire a person with a disability because you feel you are helping someone less fortunate than you.

Exclusive

Don't reject a qualified candidate due to the type or complexity of a disability.



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Zero Exclusion

- It is critical to **create expectations** that all people can work in the general workforce if they want to with the right supports!
- **Zero Exclusion** is the idea that all people who are interested in working have access to the Supported Employment Services that will support them on their employment journey.
 - No one is excluded because of the type or severity of a disability, symptoms, multiple diagnoses, personal presentations, etc.

Employment
is for Everyone.



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Why is Employment First Important?

National Core Indicators:

- Nearly 85% of individuals with significant disabilities are unemployed or underemployed.
- 44% of people who are not working want a job in the community
 - Only 29% of those who wanted a job had this as a documented goal

Individual Placement and Support (IPS) Employment Center:

- 65% of individuals with significant mental illness want to work, only 2% have access to an evidenced based Supported Employment Program



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Labor Statistics April 2024

- According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there were **8.1 million job openings** nationwide at the close of the month.
- There **5.6 million** people hired.
- That's a gap of approx **3 million positions** that remained vacant.
- According to a research report published by AAPD and Disability:IN, "**The GDP could get a boost up to \$25 billion if just 1 percent more of persons with disabilities joined the U.S. labor force.**"
- Welcoming people with disabilities into the workforce means tapping into a pool of qualified candidates who want to work, filling critical business needs, and more dollars going into local economies.



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Power of High Expectations



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**“High achievement always takes place
in the framework of high expectation.”**

- Charles Kettering



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Importance of High Expectations

A belief that someone will or should achieve something.

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.**



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Impact of Expectation

High expectations improve performance!

When we have high expectations that everyone can work if they want to, people are more likely to fulfill those expectations and consider employment.

Your expectations are powerful, and they matter!



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Employment Services and Supports



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Employment as a Journey

Employment is a journey and every person's path and experience is unique!

Self-Discovery & Skills Exploration

Job Preparation & Development

Targeted, Ongoing Support

Education & Career Training

Job Coaching & Support

Career Advancement



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Role of an Employment Specialist

Employment Support Professionals assist career seekers to enter and thrive in the workforce, to achieve their goals and find work that aligns with their strengths, needs, and interests.



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Role of an Employment Specialist

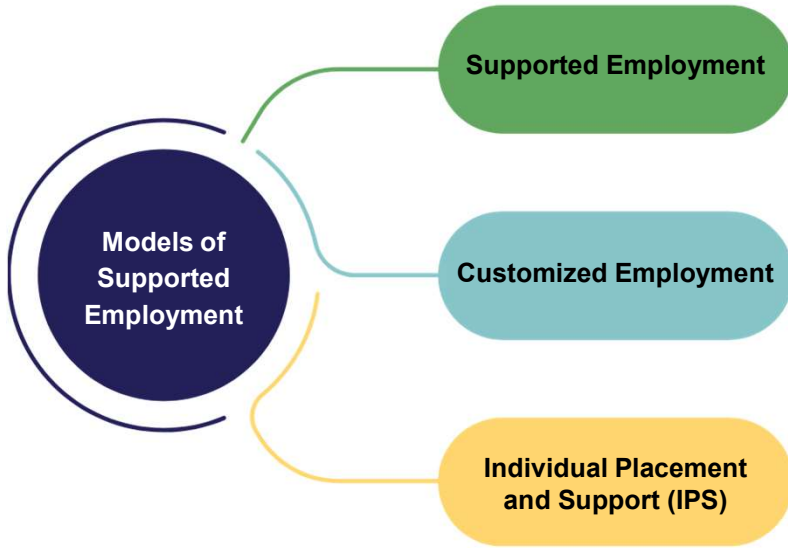
The role of an **Employment Support Professional** includes:

- Conducting activities that help people learn about their strengths, skills, and interests. What are their routines?
- Identifying their employment goals and create a vision for the future.
- Developing a Career Profile and Job Search Plan
- Facilitating a great job match by connecting a person's skills and strength and a business need.
- Developing strong relationships with local business.
- Resume Development and Interview preparation.
- Discussing Disability Disclosure.
- Negotiating Accommodations.
- On-Site Job Training and Coaching.
- Employer Education and Support.
- Transportation Training.



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Supported Employment Models



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Supported Employment Model

Supported Employment

empowers people to make their own choices about their employment journey. People receive support from employment support professionals to enter and thrive in the workforce, finding and negotiating jobs that align with their strengths, interests, and employment preferences.

Competitive Integrated Employment

Zero Exclusion

Person-Centered Planning



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Customized Employment Model

Customized Employment is a universal employment strategy and is especially useful for career seekers where traditional job development methods have not typically been successful.

Example: People who have been told they 'can not' or 'should not' work because of their disability.

Competitive Integrated Employment

Discovery

Job Development



Individual Placement and Support (IPS) Model

Your employment journey is a pathway to recovery.

IPS WORKS!


Two-thirds of people with serious mental illness want to work but only 15% are employed.

Meaningful work is linked to positive health outcomes.

Being productive is a basic human need. Employment has a positive impact on health.

IPS supported employment helps people living with behavioral health conditions work in careers of their choosing.

How can IPS supported employment work for you?



#IPSWorks #IPSColorado

Individual Placement and Support (IPS) is an evidence-based practice that is proven to help individuals who have serious mental illness access competitive and integrated employment. IPS is an extensively researched and highly effective vocational intervention (Bond, 2017)



Supplemental Supports

There are many other services that support a person on their employment journey:

- Transportation Training
- Assistive Technology/Everyday Technology
- Benefits Planning
- Pre-Employment Transition Services
- Other Professional Services
- Community Resources



Provider Transformation in Colorado

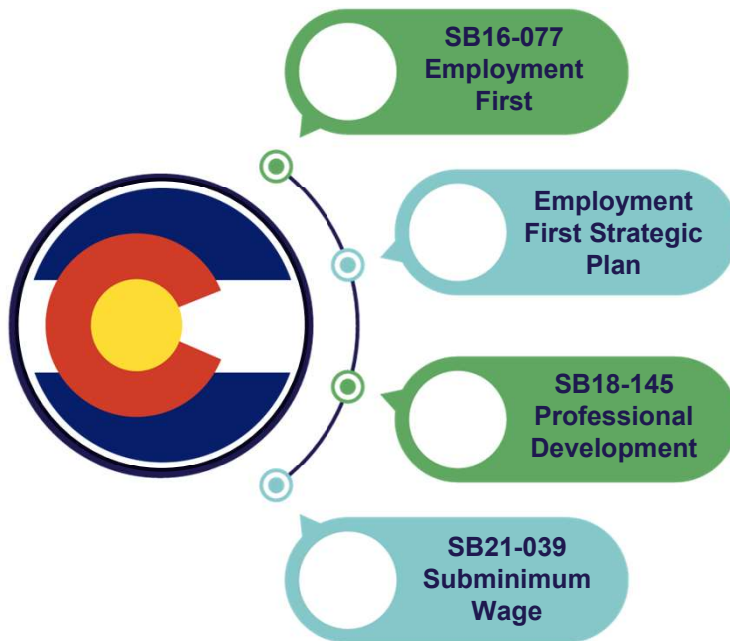


What is Provider Transformation?

Provider Transformation is the realignment of a disability service provider agency's business model from non-CIE to promoting CIE for the people with disabilities they serve.



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Key Legislation in Colorado



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Let's Hear from Colorado Providers!



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Let's Hear from Colorado Providers!



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Describe your journey through Provider Transformation as it relates to employment services that exclusively promote CIE.



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Share some best practices, recommendations, and/or lessons learned about Provider Transformation.



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**What words of encouragement/wisdom
would you offer other agencies on their own
Provider Transformation journey?**



**What questions do you have for these
pacesetters of Employment First?**



Thank you!



Visit our website and sign up
for COEF communications!
<https://employmentfirstcolorado.org>

We truly appreciate your time and attention
in learning more about Employment first in
Colorado!

If you have more questions after today's
presentation, please contact:

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