



# Employment First: The Texas Initiative

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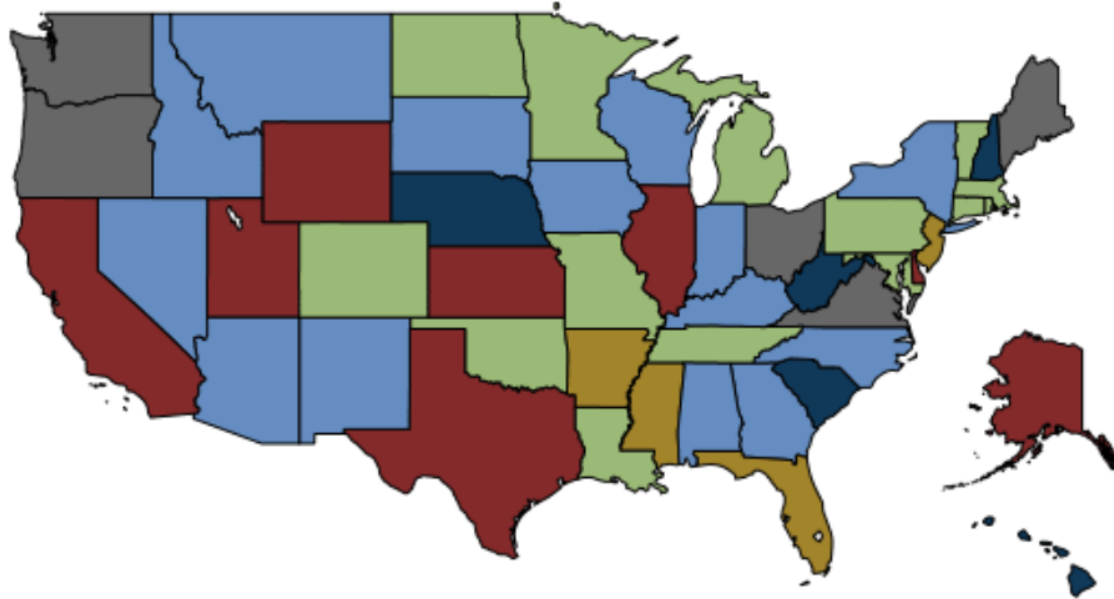
# The Texas Employment First Initiative

(1) Background information

(2) Desired impact

(3) Providing services

# Action by State



Type of  
Employment  
First Actions

- No Known Activity or Policy
- Activity - No Policy
- Directive
- Executive Order
- Legislation
- Legislation, & Directive or Executive Order

Number of States  
with Any Activity

46

Number of States  
with Formal Policy Action

32

Source: <http://rtc.umn.edu/prb/214/>



# Texas Statistics

- Receiving public funded supports: 46,103
- In integrated employment: 1,947 – 4%
- Funding for integrated services: 2%

Source:

2012 Disability Status Report: Texas, [disabilitystatistics.org](http://disabilitystatistics.org)

StateData: The National Report on Employment Services and Outcomes, 2013

<http://www.statedata.info/statepages/Texas>



# Texas' Employment First Policy

It is the policy of the state that earning a living **wage** through **competitive** employment in the **general workforce** is the **priority** and provided **outcome** for working-age individuals with disabilities who receive **public benefits**.

Government Code Sec. 521.0244



# Expectations





# Self Determination

- The **institutional** service model presumes the need for **care taking** support for the person.
- Support for Self Determination go well beyond the “care taker” service and require the staff that directly supports the person to learn new skills:
  - supported decision-making,
  - job and task analysis,
  - networking and budgeting,
  - to name just a few.

# Texas Employment First Policy

Health and Human Services Commission

DADS, DARS, DSHS, DFPS

Texas Education Agency

Texas Workforce Commission

*“shall jointly adopt and implement an employment-first policy in accordance with the state’s policy.”*





# Texas Employment First Policy

1. Affirm that individuals with disabilities meet the same employment standards as other employees.



# Texas Employment First Policy

2. Ensure working-age youth and adults receive factual information about employment, including public benefits and work incentives.

Transition in Texas

<http://www.transitionintexas.org/Page/143>

# Texas Employment First Policy

3. Ensure individuals have opportunities for education or training as pathways to employment.

# Texas Employment First Policy

4. Promote individualized training designed to prepare the individual for his/her preferred employment.

# Texas Employment First Policy

5. Promote partnerships with employers to overcome barriers to meeting workforce needs with technology and innovation.

# Texas Employment First Policy

6. Ensure staff of schools, vocational programs, and community providers are trained and supported to assist in achieving the goal of competitive employment for all individuals with disabilities.



# Texas Employment First Policy

7. Ensure that competitive employment, while the priority & preferred outcome, is not required to maintain public benefits.

# Can We *Really* Do This?



# EFTF Recommendations

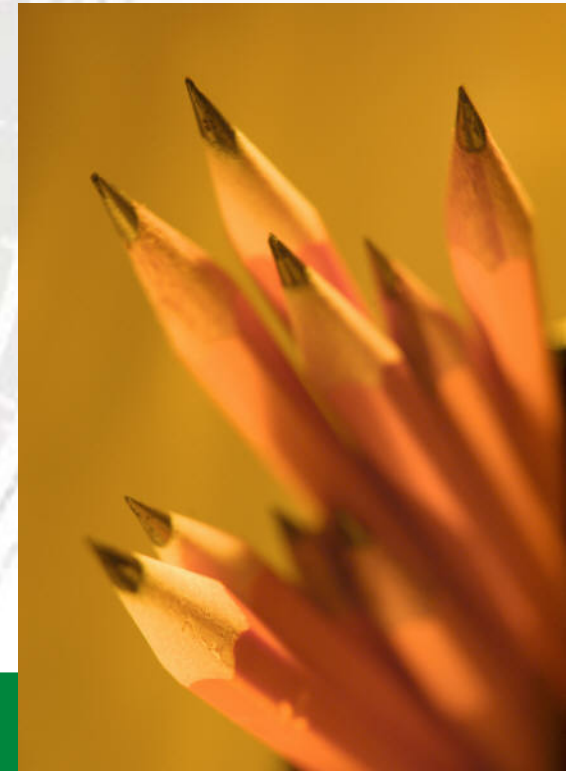
<http://www.dads.state.tx.us/providers/supportedemployment/EFTFReport.pdf>





# DATA

- Employment services and outcomes includes HHSC, TEA, and TWC
- Establish goals
  - to increase number of individuals in competitive employment, and
  - decrease number earning sub-minimum wage.





# Employers & Self Employment

- Employer resources
  - Recruiting, hiring and supports that work for employees with disabilities.
- State agencies to become model employers
- Business owned by individuals with disabilities as “historically underutilized businesses” (HUBS)



# Tools

- Person-centered vocational planning
- Provide training for employment specialists, teachers, job seekers and families
  - employment-first;
  - assessing & communicating with persons with significant disabilities;
  - social security work incentives; and
  - Evidenced-based practices.





# Vocational Rehabilitation



- Coordination with DARS VR services and Medicaid waivers
- Expand DARS guidance to achieve employment outcomes for individuals with significant disabilities
- Clarify DARS policies
  - Self-employment
  - Transitional employment
  - Vocational and academic training

# Long-Term Services

- Medicaid waiver
  - Incentivize community jobs
  - Eliminate conflicts with DARS
  - Evidenced-based practices
- Define as core service for Local Mental Health Authorities
- Develop technical assistance and financial incentives





# Youth & Transition

- Publicize school transition program best practices to schools, students, parents and others.
- Implement intent of WIOA including TEA / DARS collaboration.
- Transition planning for students with disabilities should promote community based work skills, supports and employment options.

# Workforce Commission

- Identify (TWC) workforce service strategies that have most success and share across system
- Enhanced partnerships of agencies with employers, local workforce centers and others.
- Establish disability employment committees of local workforce boards & ensure staff in each workforce solutions office has disability expertise.

# WAGES


- By 9-1-16, prohibit using state funds for services to high school graduates in sheltered workshop programs.
- Provide funds for conversion from sheltered work to community jobs
- Prohibit use of public funds for segregated settings



# Federal Initiatives

- Work Incentive Planning and Assistance – SSA Work Incentives
- Work Investment Opportunity Act (WIOA)
- Medicaid – *integrated services*





# Competitive Integrated Employment Defined

“full or part-time work at minimum wage or higher, with wages and benefits similar to those without disabilities performing the same work, and fully integrated with co-workers without disabilities.”



# Customized Employment and Supported Employment

- Customized Employment
  - “ competitive integrated employment, for an individual with a significant disability, that is based on an individualized determination of the strengths, needs and interest of the individual with a significant disability...designed to meet the specific abilities of the individual with a significant disability and the business needs of the employer...carried out through flexible strategies.”



# Wages

- Rehabilitation Act, Section 511 demands a series of steps before an individual under the age of 24 can be placed in a job paying less than minimum wage.



# Home & Community-Based Waiver Services

- Be ***typical*** of where people without disabilities live and work (houses, condos, and apartments in neighborhoods).
- Provide the same ***access to community*** resources given to people without disabilities.
- Allow people ***control over their spending money*** and other personal resources.
- Support people to be in ***community employment*** alongside people without disabilities and earn minimum wage or higher.

# Thank You!



- Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities,  
[www.tcdd.texas.gov](http://www.tcdd.texas.gov)
- Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services,  
<http://www.dads.state.tx.us/providers/supportemployment/EFTFReport.pdf>
- APSE, <http://www.apse.org/employment-first/map/>