

# EMPLOYMENT FIRST

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Office For Citizens With Developmental  
Disabilities  
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**Perceptions,  
NOT PEOPLE,  
Need to  
Change!**



# Do You Believe???

- ▶ That everyone deserves the opportunity to find and develop their best talents and contributions?
- ▶ That local economies can benefit from people who purchase more goods and services and who pay taxes?
- ▶ That many people need assistance to find their talents and ways to use them in their communities?
- ▶ That businesses can benefit from employees who are enthusiastic and well –matched to their business needs?
- ▶ That workers, families, businesses, schools, employment agencies and entire communities can and should come together to include people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (ID/DD ) as productive members in the workplace?
- ▶ That people with ID/DD can and should be contributing members of their communities?

**IF SO.....**

**THEN YOU BELIEVE IN  
EMPLOYMENT  
FIRST!!**



# Employment First

- Over the last few years the term “**employment first**” has become widely used to describe how state and local systems across the country articulate the values and philosophy which support employment services available to individuals and families.
  - An “**employment first**” approach means **integrated individual employment** is offered before other service options, and that community employment is supported as the priority outcome in policy, practice, and quality management.
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# This means that.....

- ▶ Schools, service providers, and funding agency staff are trained and capable in assisting individuals with disabilities to reach their integrated employment goals.
- ▶ Transitioning high school students are offered assistance to prepare for and obtain real community jobs at comparable wages and benefits just as other young adults without disabilities.
- ▶ Staff of all employment programs support integrated employment as the preferred option.
- ▶ Individuals currently participating in day programs (day habilitation, prevocational) are given the option to explore and learn about integrated employment
- ▶ In some cases, a customized job to match the individuals strengths with employer needs can be the best integrated employment option

# LA Data for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities

- 67% of individuals receiving employment services through OCDD are served in a facility-based work or non-work program. (Day Habilitation/Prevocational)
- 33% of the individuals receiving employment services from OCDD are served in integrated employment. (mobile crews/enclaves/individual)
  - 10% are in integrated Individual Employment.
- The national average for individuals with DD in integrated Individual Employment is 20%.

# Individuals With Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Have the Right to Work

- We must work around complexities such as behavioral challenges, legal issues, and negative attitudes with solutions rather than exclusion!
- We must welcome and include families, friends, community members --everyone we can enlist as it can't be done by one person or one agency!
- It takes the Partnerships, Vision, and Creativity to overcome the perceived or real barriers to employment!

# Laying the Foundation for Employment

- OCDD found that the emphasis that had once been placed on employment had shifted away but recognized that it was a valuable part of individual's life's
  - In 2006, OCDD implemented the Supports Waiver in an effort to re-focus on employment and build capacity
  - In 2007, OCDD joined the State Employment Leadership Network (SELN) in an effort to again place an emphasis on improving employment outcomes for individuals with ID/DD
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# State Employment Leadership Network

- LA is 1 of 25 states that are a part of the SELN with a goal of improving employment outcomes for individuals with ID/DD
  - SELN brings together state Developmental Disability agencies for sharing, educating and providing guidance on practices and policies around employment.
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# Focus On Employment

- In 2010, OCDD partnered with Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) to develop the Work Pay\$ Strategic Plan

[www.work-pays.org](http://www.work-pays.org)

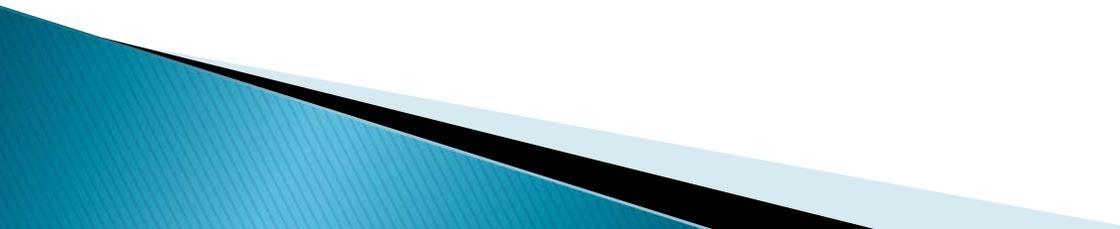
- In 2011, OCDD formed the Employment First Consortium

# Employment First Consortium

- **Consists of individuals with ID/DD, family members of individuals with ID/DD, advocacy agencies, providers, and other stakeholders who are committed to improving employment outcomes for individuals with ID/DD**
  - **Crafted OCDD's Employment First Position Statement, Employment definition and the Guiding Principles**
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# OCDD Launches Employment First Initiative

July 1, 2011

- **EMPLOYMENT WILL BE THE PRIMARY OUTCOME FOR ALL PERSONS RECEIVING OCDD SERVICES WHO ARE OF WORKING AGE.**
  - **Employment** is characterized by typical jobs with competitive compensation and are fully integrated in the workforce.
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# Guiding Principles

- **People with ID/DD are treated with respect, dignity and consideration, by being provided employment opportunities that are typical and fully integrated in the community, and where they earn a competitive wage. Each person served is a whole person with unique needs, gifts and capabilities.**
  - **Services shall be person-centered and delivered with an understanding of the needs of the person and the community. People with ID/DD are all integral parts of the competitive workforce and have something valuable to contribute to the community.**
  - **Services shall be evidenced-based with a systemic approach that focuses on eliminating barriers to individual employment in the community.**
  - **There is an expectation that all persons with an ID/DD have an equal opportunity to obtain meaningful employment in order to meet the human resource requirements of Louisiana's employers and expanding labor markets.**
  - **There is a commitment to providing fair, accountable and ethical services to people with ID/DD and to the business community.**
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# Plan to Increase Integrated Community Employment

All Individuals served by OCDD will:

- Engage in career exploration and employment discussions with their team at their annual Plan of Care meetings and/or as needed
- Be informed of and referred as needed to other employment related services such as Louisiana Rehabilitation Services, Louisiana Workforce Commission and Ticket to Work and Benefits Planning
- Have informed choice to engage in the most appropriate integrated employment setting possible including competitive employment, volunteer opportunities and mentorships
- Have the support services needed including paid and natural supports to ensure success in their employment setting

# The OCDD and Louisiana Rehabilitation Services Connection

- ▶ All OCDD waiver consumers who are ready for employment, must be referred by their Support Coordinator (SC) to LRS to receive Supported Employment (SE) services
  - If the consumer is denied LRS services, then the OCDD waiver can pay for SE
- ▶ Upon referral to LRS, SC must ensure that consumer attends all appointments and is ready for the appointments with appropriate paperwork etc.
- ▶ Upon being determined eligible for LRS services, SC is to ensure that consumer follows through with meetings and appointments and must work closely with LRS counselor and provider
- ▶ Upon becoming employed, SC must ensure that consumer is going to work, and is working with provider
- ▶ Upon the consumer working for at least 90 days satisfactorily, LRS can close the case and at this point, OCDD waiver (NOW, ROW and SW) can begin paying for SE services such as follow along

# Goals and Outcomes

- OCDD waivers and ICF-DD employment services will operate on consistent service definitions, rates, and policy that incentivize supported employment
- Employment and/or career planning will be components of every planning meeting and will be a part of their Plan of Care
- The number of people in competitive employment will increase annually
- Community employers and the general population will have increased awareness of the benefits of hiring people with disabilities
- Transition students with ID/DD will have real competitive employment prior to exiting high school
- Employment providers will be trained and qualified to serve individuals with ID/DD who have a wide range of support needs
- A system for data collection and analysis to measure system-wide outcomes will be implemented.

# Employment Statement

*The Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) believes that ALL people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities CAN work and contribute to their community with the appropriate supports and that it is time to improve employment outcomes by using Employment First Best Practices; thereby resulting in employment of people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities just like people without disabilities.*



# 2012-2013 Plan

- Add an Employment component to the Plan Of Care (POC)
- Redefine and align vocational definitions, rates and units across OCDD waivers (New Opportunities, Supports Waiver and Residential Options) and add new vocational services to the Children's Choice Waiver
- Provide training and education on Employment to individuals, families, Support Coordinators (SC), providers and stakeholders
- Facilitate Cross training with LRS, DOE, OCDD R/D/A and SCs in order to make the connection
- Develop "Employment Teams" in each region
- Provide assistance and training opportunities to providers in developing/improving their Supported Employment (SE) programs
- Data Collection

# End Results

- Working in the community and a part of our workforce!
  - Earning competitive wages with benefits that are consistent with their co-workers!
  - Potential for advancement on the job!
  - Contributing to our economy!
  - Participating in their community alongside other citizens and with their friends!
  - Increased self-esteem!
  - Becoming as self-sufficient as possible and living as independently as possible!
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**I ALWAYS WONDERED  
WHY SOMEBODY  
DIDN'T DO SOMETHING  
ABOUT THAT.....**

**THEN I REALIZED I WAS  
SOMEBODY!**



# Contact Information

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