

EMPLOYMENT FIRST

Increase Competitive Integrated Employment



The Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities (TCDD) supports the position that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) have the right to integrated and meaningful employment at competitive wages that includes job training and opportunities for career growth and enhancement.

EMPLOYMENT FIRST

It is policy and law in the State of Texas that earning a living wage through competitive integrated employment is the first and preferred outcome for adults with disabilities who receive public benefits. Employment First promotes the expectation that Texans with disabilities are valued members of the workforce and able to meet the same employment standards, responsibilities, and expectations as other working-age adults. The Council supports Employment First policies and will work with the legislature, state agency staff, stakeholders (self-advocates, family members, and employers), and interested parties to promote Employment First policies and positions.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR EDUCATION

Data from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) show that only 21% of high school graduates who received special education services were enrolled in higher education within one year of leaving high school in 2016 – the lowest rate of higher education enrollment among students who receive special education services since TEA began monitoring effective transition in 2009.

In a survey on the post-secondary academic recruitment of students with IDD, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) found that only 10% of all Texas higher education institutions collaborate with the Texas Workforce Commission – Vocational Rehabilitation Services (TWC-VR) to connect with students. This suggests that there is an opportunity to improve collaboration between state agencies to leverage Employment First opportunities through education.

COMPETITIVE INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT

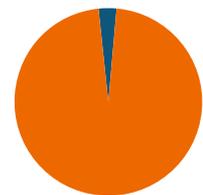
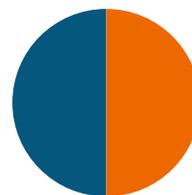
Competitive integrated employment means full or part-time work in the community for which the person is paid at least minimum wage. Integrated settings are typical businesses in which individuals with disabilities work side-by-side with people without disabilities, encounter members of the public, and are eligible for the same advancement opportunities as workers without disabilities. However, only 5% of Texans with IDD served by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) work in settings where they are integrated with other people without disabilities. Through competitive integrated employment, people with IDD gain an important entry into their communities, develop a sense of being valued, earn wages and job benefits, and get an opportunity to make a meaningful contribution.

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

In 2000, 50% of Texas waiver participants with IDD had employment services included as part of their service plan. However, in 2017, only 3% of Texas waiver participants with IDD had employment services included as part of their service plan.

Fiscal Year: 2000

Fiscal Year: 2017



■ People **with employment services** on their service plan
■ People **without employment services** on their service plan

*Employees with disabilities are rated by supervisors as being equally or **more productive** than co-workers and as achieving equal or **better overall job performance**. Hiring managers and executives reported that employees with disabilities **stay in their jobs longer**.*

TCDD INVESTMENT IN TEXAS

TCDD has funded multiple projects throughout Texas designed to help more people with disabilities acquire competitive integrated employment. Below are some examples.



Project H.E.A.R.T.: This project created an app to promote competitive employment opportunities in inventory, requisitions, shipping and receiving (and similar jobs) for adults with IDD.



Project SEARCH®: This project developed internships in healthcare settings for college students with IDD that lead to integrated employment at a competitive wage.



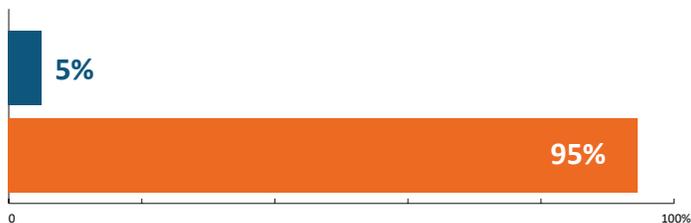
Higher Education Projects: Three TCDD projects help people with IDD participate in post-secondary education to explore careers and pursue meaningful employment.

WORK INCENTIVES & BENEFITS PLANNING

Individuals with IDD and their families should be fully aware and informed of ways to maintain benefits while working, if needed. Any disincentives to working caused by actual or perceived risk of losing benefits should be reduced by making public benefits more flexible and getting the information about work and benefits to individuals with disabilities as they transition from school to adult life.

LOW INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT RATES

Over 90% of Texans with IDD work in segregated settings and only 5% of Texans with IDD work in integrated settings with other people without disabilities.



- Texans with IDD working in **integrated** settings
- Texans with IDD working in **segregated** settings

SUBMINIMUM WAGE



Currently, more than 6,000 Texans are paid less than minimum wage solely because of their disability status. Many are paid as little as a penny an hour; most are paid a dollar or less. Texas has 107 of these settings, 9 of which have State Use contracts. According to the Sunset Advisory Commission, these contracts directly contradict Texas' Employment First policy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Eliminate subminimum wage contracts from the state use program and phase out other subminimum wage settings statewide.
2. Fully coordinate Employment First initiatives across state agencies and cultivate a shared community commitment to Employment First, including individuals and families, community leaders, public officials, schools, organizations, and others.
3. Prepare students with disabilities for employment and post-secondary success, including expanding higher education opportunities.
4. Improve awareness and access to information regarding employment services, work incentives, and benefits planning for people with disabilities who receive Medicaid services and transition-age students receiving special education services.
5. Increase the number of employers that hire people with disabilities.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information, contact Ashley Ford at (512) 437-5412 or ashley.ford@tcdd.texas.gov.

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