

EmploymentFirstMaine

Every person. Every talent. Every opportunity.

Employment First Maine: An Update

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EFM's Vision: EVERYONE can work!

Maine is committed to supporting career development and meaningful employment for all working aged individuals with disabilities.

Employment is part of the natural course of adult life and provides opportunities for economic gain, personal growth and contributing to one's community.

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“Employment First Maine Act”

- The Act (LD 1352) defines:
 - ~ Customized Employment
 - ~ First and preferred service or support option
 - ~ Integrated community-based employment
- Processes for program monitoring and quality assurance
- First and preferred service or support option
- Coordination of efforts and information
- Establishes the Employment First Maine Coalition
- Passed into law, June 22nd, 2013!

The Coalition's charge under the Act:

- Promote coordination and collaboration among state agencies;
- Review state policies, plans, programs and activities in order to determine whether they effectively meet the needs
- Serve as a conduit for information and input to aid advocacy groups, commissions and councils that focus on issues facing persons with disabilities in Maine;

The Coalition's charge (cont'd)

- Make recommendations to the Governor, the Legislature and state agencies
- Review and comment on proposed legislation affecting the employment of persons with disabilities; and,
- Propose and promote rules and policies to state agencies that provide services and supports to persons with disabilities

Coalition Work Groups

- Legislative/Policy
- Data and Outcomes
- Transition of Youth
- Capacity Building/Systems Development
- Business Engagement
- Communication

Legislative Policy Work Group

- Goal: To review and make recommendations for changes to rule, regulation and/or statutes that eliminate barriers to integrated, community-based and customized employment

Data Work Group

- Goal: To obtain existing data from stakeholders that is aligned with the tenets of the EF Maine and make recommendations based on review of this data

Transition Work Group

- Goal: Determine and address needs of youth, educators, families and others in order to improve better transitions to and outcomes in competitive, integrated employment by collaborating with DHHS, DOE and DOL to recommend and support best practices in employment

Capacity Building/Systems Development

- Goal: To review systems and make recommendations regarding the professional development and training needs of the provider community in order to realize the goals of EF Maine

Employer Engagement

- Goal: To gather information that informs recommendations to expand the engagement of companies and the outcome of employment for people with disabilities

Communication

- Goal: To establish, coordinate and maintain a clear, consistent and accurate message about Employment First Maine and the work of the coalition by promoting coordination and collaboration among state agencies to advance integrated, community-based employment and customized employment

Final Consensus Recommendations of the Employment First Maine Coalition

The Coalition included 27 recommendations in the final report, derived from:

- Input from the committee work
- Information on unmet needs gathered at 2014 EFM “One Year Later” Summit
- Feedback and discussion among Coalition members

Recommendations

- 1. Support and make available a wide-ranging, tiered system of professional development and technical assistance for all providers of any services** to individuals with disabilities, including educators and case managers, across the state. The professional development should be accessible and affordable with the goal of assuring a common foundational level of knowledge and skills to:

Recommendations (cont'd)

- 2. Make Employment 101 curriculum** widely available in multiple formats to provide a values-based and foundational introduction to the concept that everyone can work.
- 3. Assure uniform employment services staff credentialing across state agencies,** Maine Departments of Education, Labor, and Health & Human Services, including recognition of the newly created job coach credential.

Recommendations (cont'd)

4. Create a mentoring program to support provider agency leadership in their transformation towards employment services.

5. Phase out subminimum wage certificates...in the state of Maine and assist the small number of Maine residents with disabilities, currently receiving subminimum wage, to maintain their current level of employment in jobs that pay at or above minimum wage.

Recommendations (cont'd)

- 6. Address the need for cross-system data on employment outcomes and services to effectively measure over time the state's progress toward full implementation of the vision and goals of the Employment First Maine Act.**

Recommendations (cont'd)

- 7. Pursue the possibility that the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services' could adopt a policy of presumptive eligibility**
- 8. Increase resources devoted to employment supports and services for individuals served by SAMHS**

Recommendations (cont'd)

- 9. Promote a process for working together across systems to develop protocols for services to transition-age youth that are based on best practice that lead to employment.**
- 10. Repurpose resources or develop new resources to conduct transition planning and services**

Recommendations (cont'd)

- 11. Develop, promote, and widely disseminate resources for families**
- 12. Analyze services funding distribution and rate structures and realign where necessary to promote and incentivize employment services**
- 13. Recruit and assist with the development of new employment service providers in underserved areas**

Recommendations (cont'd)

- 14. Share and promote resources on customized employment in Maine, highlighting successful employment outcomes.**
- 15. Promote understanding and use of assistive technology and accommodations needed to support the inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace.**

Recommendations (cont'd)

- 16. Develop and implement mechanisms to ensure that collaboration around employment at all levels and especially at the provider level occurs...**
- 17. Develop an “Employment Report Card” for providers** that identify the number of individuals served, the number of individuals employed, the number of hours worked and wages earned, in support of meeting requirements of outcomes-based contracting.

Recommendations (cont'd)

- 18. Recommit the State of Maine to Become a Model Employer** with an Updated Executive Order...
- 19. Increase focus on Business as a Customer** in the Employment First Initiative and across all DHHS/DOL/DOE initiatives, implementing a dual customer approach: meeting the needs of both businesses and individuals with disabilities.

Recommendations (cont'd)

- 20. Implement new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Employer Section**
- 21. Provide increased support to Business**
- 22. Promote a Business to Business platform**
- 23. Conduct a coordinated, focused educational/
marketing approach to businesses**

Recommendations (cont'd)

- 24. Continue financial support for The Maine Business Leadership Network** established in 2010 that provides a mechanism for business to support one another.

- 25. Allow for Business Consultant roles** within State Offices that provide support and services directly to a Business engaging in disability hiring initiatives.

Recommendations (cont'd)

- 26. Improve and increase availability, options, resources, funding, vehicles, etc., for people to have access to reliable transportation to and from employment.**
- 27. Require state agencies to develop a plan to address these recommendations**

Employment First Maine: *Looking Back...*

- We have undertaken a significant amount of work: both policy and practice
- We are grateful to ODEP's EFLSMP support
- This is hard work and requires the steadfast commitment of all parties
- Not everyone shares the same urgency or the same beliefs that everyone can work
- Work with those most willing to change first
- We need to work with families and schools at a much earlier age

Employment First Maine: *Looking Forward...*

- Status of the Report and Recommendations at the Maine Legislature
- Next steps
- Ongoing work...

Employment First Maine Information

www.employmentfirstmaine.org

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