



## **Employment First Real Jobs. Real Wages.**

What is Employment First? Employment First means that competitive, integrated employment should be the first and preferred choice for people with disabilities who get publicly funded support. It starts with the idea that a person with a disability can work. For too long people with disabilities have had to demonstrate their “readiness” for employment. Everyone has the right to Work.

What is Competitive, Integrated Employment?

Competitive, Integrated Employment is work that is full-time or part-time for which someone:

- Is paid at or above minimum wage, the same as employees without disabilities doing the same job.
- Gets the same benefits as other employees without disabilities doing similar jobs.
- Works at a place where the employee interacts with other people without disabilities.
- Is presented the same chances for promotion as other employees without disabilities in similar jobs.

About 1 in 3 young Arizonans with a disability were not going to work or school as recently as 2015 compared with 1 in 4 in 2021. Also, more people with a disability have an Associate’s or higher degree than in previous years, reaching 28% in 2021. Arizona believes in the dignity of work. With fair support, accommodations, and encouragement, many more people with disabilities can work successfully in the community.

Advocates recognize that Employment First represents a shift in expectations. Additional resources may be needed to test new supports and services and to help providers through this transition while they continue to serve their current clients. This transition period must also include the development of new skills, training, certifications, and ultimately new pay structures.

How Many Other States Have Implemented Employment First? About 40 states have some type of effort focused on Employment First. At least 21 of these states have an official state policy

declaring that employment in the community is the first and preferred option for people with disabilities. Three recent examples include:

- In 2022 Utah adopted Senate Joint Resolution 15 recognizing Employment First.
- In 2022 Kentucky passed SB104 stating that “It is the policy of the Commonwealth of Kentucky that competitive integrated employment shall be considered the first and primary option for persons with disabilities of working age who desire to become Employed.”

What Is the Potential Economic Impact of Implementing Employment First? According to an Arizona study conducted by the Institute for Community Inclusion, increasing Arizona’s labor force participation rate for people with disabilities by only 6 percentage points over ten years could result in:

- An increase of between \$281.04 million and \$818.82 million in gross domestic product (GDP) each year. Over a ten-year period, this could result in up to \$8.19 billion added to Arizona’s economy and 20,420 jobs being added to Arizona’s economy.
- In the short term, Arizona could expect the money it collects in taxes to increase by \$14.25 million to \$41.53 million each year.

Arizona has a dynamic and growing economy. Arizonans with disabilities want to be part of it. The time is now to make real jobs and real wages available to this community. The time is now for Employment First. For more information visit: [AZ Employment First website](#) [Arizona APSE Chapter website](#)