

# Department of Health and Human Services Behavioral and Developmental Services

## Policy Manual - Vocational Policy

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### Background:

In the last decade many of the beliefs and perceptions about the capacities of people with disabilities have been challenged through changing social policy and by people with disabilities and their families. However, unemployment rates for people with disabilities are still four times higher than those in the general population. Yet over 80% of those same people say they want to work. It is difficult to understand these statistics when our economy is strong and many employers are experiencing increasing difficulty in recruiting and retraining employees.

Despite our best intentions, some of the specially designed programs have isolated many people with disabilities from their communities. Therefore, full integration has, for many, not been realized. In this culture, work is often the vehicle for such integration to occur- jobs bring opportunities to make friends, money earned brings opportunities for choices regarding where to live and play and with what supports.

The role of vocational services is to provide people with disabilities the supports and strategies whereby they can develop meaningful and productive vocational roles in their communities. Providers of these services should build mutually beneficial relationships with businesses to move away from dependency-based human service approaches and perspectives and to move to naturally occurring interactions.

### Policy Statement:

It is the intent of the Department of Behavioral and Developmental Services (BDS) to have work and career as a focus of services that lead to the desired integration of the people it serves. Exploring employment as a goal with each client it serves is paramount to comprehensive planning and service provision.

Vocational services must be based on a well defined vocational service plan that focuses on the individual's particular strengths, needs and choices and is developed through a regularly scheduled, individualized planning process.

### Principles: \*

Vocational services must have as core values rehabilitative, recovery-based and/or social-role valorization\* approaches leading to continued and full inclusion into employment settings for the people served. In order to achieve this goal, the following principles will guide development:

1. Persons who express a desire to work will be presumed able to work and planning will be individualized to the person's desired quality of life.
2. Assessment of a person's need will be driven from an approach that starts with the person's capabilities and adds supports to promote the person's development.
3. Services will be designed to be the most enhancing for the individual, and will promote inclusion in communities.
4. All employment support will include an emphasis on the development and utilization of natural supports and will be delivered from a perspective of the whole person.

5. Quality improvement and service accountability will be driven by these principles; that considers elements of service provision (outlined below), employment outcomes; and the satisfaction of the individual.
6. All other applicable/licensing/accreditation requirements remain in effect.

\* Social-role valorization is the use of culturally valued means in order to enable, establish and maintain valued social roles for people. (revised 11/13/00)

#### Service Provision Elements:

##### Organizational Elements (Management/Customer Relationship)

- Seeks multi-source funding for employment programming
- Facilitates collaborative/partnership approaches
- Provides flexibility of employment support strategies (regardless of program model)
- Integrates cultural competence throughout the organization
- Provides ongoing staff training and development
- Includes people with disabilities in the governance of the organization
- Conducts outcomes evaluation and customer satisfaction surveys (employers and employment services users)

##### Service Delivery Elements (Service Provider/Customer Relationship)

- Integrates customer choice and self-determination
- Facilitates job search for integrated, inclusive, competitive (e.g., not sheltered) employment opportunities with variety in both industry type and types of jobs
- Assists people in securing employment opportunities that provide more than minimum wage, with benefits and opportunities for career growth
- Provides an individualized, person-centered and collaborative approach to job development and securing employment
- Provides skills training for customers to promote communications with employers about disability related issues in the workplace
- Provides supports for customer decisions about managing benefits
- Provides ongoing educational support for career development and general skills building
- Provides long term supports and facilitates natural supports
- Assists people in developing individual and group support networks (clinicians, case managers, family, peers)

##### Employer Elements (Provider/Employer Relationships)

- Develops and maintains ongoing communications and relationships with employers
- Conducts activities that promote corporate commitment to hiring people with disabilities
- Conducts ongoing research of the local employment market

- Responds to employer needs to facilitate maintaining employment of people with disabilities
- Provides opportunities for employer education and technical assistance concerning maintaining employment of people with disabilities

NOTE: Providers who do not meet these service elements should submit strategic plans that provide evidence of movement in these directions.

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Lynn F. DUBY, Commissioner

October 18, 2000  
Date