

TRANSITION TO EMPLOYMENT



GET THE
FACTS
#3

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FACT

Employment First Doesn't Mean Employment Only

“Employment First” is a growing movement both nationally and in Massachusetts. There are now 38 states with an Employment First policy, including Massachusetts. The vision for Employment First, according to the Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE), is that “Employment in the general workforce is the first and preferred outcome in the provision of publicly funded services for all working age citizens with disabilities, regardless of level of disability.”

The Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services' Employment First Policy, signed in 2010, similarly states that “for working age adults served by [DDS], integrated, individual employment is the preferred service option and optimal outcome.” Since 2013, DDS has been working to make this shift. From 2013 to 2019 the number of people supported by DDS in individual integrated employment increased from about 1,700 to 2,500. In 2016 the use of sheltered work was eliminated as a publicly-funded option.

What is integrated, individual employment, according to the DDS policy?

- The individual is hired and paid directly by the employer (i.e., the person is not paid through subcontract with the service provider).
- Employment takes place in work settings where the majority of employees do not have disabilities.
- The position is an individual job (i.e., not a group or enclave setting).

This definition is similar to the definition of competitive integrated employment, as defined in [Get the Facts #1](#).

What does Employment First mean for transitioning youth and their families in Massachusetts?

- When planning for adult services, every effort should be made to encourage youth to consider employment before consideration of other options.

- Assistance and support to obtain integrated, individual employment should always be an expectation.
- Employment First does not mean you need to pursue employment right away when transitioning from school to adult services. While integrated, individual employment is prioritized, DDS continues to offer a variety of day and employment services options, including group employment and Community-Based Day Services. These services can support youth on their pathway to competitive integrated employment through exploration of work interests and skill development while providing structured programming on a regular schedule.

If you are interested in exploring how to combine inclusive day services toward a more meaningful life for your loved one, contact your DDS service coordinator to discuss what services and options are available.

Resources for more information

Massachusetts DDS Employment First Policy. July 2010 DDS policy on Employment First.
www.mass.gov/lists/dds-policies

Association of People Supporting Employment First. Established in 1988, APSE is “the only national organization to focus exclusively on inclusive employment and career advancement opportunities for individuals with disabilities.”

<https://apse.org/employment-first/>

A Purpose in Life: Why Employment First Matters to Self-Advocates. Publication from Self Advocates Becoming Empowered and Green Mountain Self Advocates, explaining in their words why Employment First is important.

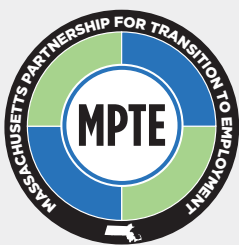
www.thinkwork.org/sites/thinkwork.org/files/files/sabe_EF_2018.pdf

The Massachusetts Blueprint for Success describes the MA Department of Developmental Services’ (DDS) Employment First policy and strategy.

www.mass.gov/files/documents/2016/07/qc/blueprint-for-success.pdf

School Days to Pay Days: An Employment Planning Guide for Families of Young Adults with Intellectual Disabilities.

www.communityinclusion.org/schooldays/images/DDS_book_2011.pdf



Sponsored by the Massachusetts Partnership for Transition to Employment (MPTE), a federal system change grant designed to improve transition outcomes that lead directly to paid employment and/or post-secondary options for individuals with ID/DD. The MPTE is led by the Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services with partners that include the: Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, Executive office of Labor and Workforce Development, the MA Developmental Disability Council, Massachusetts Advocates Standing Strong, The Arc of Massachusetts, and the Institute for Community Inclusion/UMass Boston.