

EXPECT EMPLOYMENT

EMPLOYMENT FIRST TASK FORCE
REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR





A NOTE FROM **GOVERNOR BILL HASLAM**

During my tenure as governor, we have embraced the philosophy that "All, Means All" when it comes to opportunities for Tennesseans, including those with disabilities. Ensuring people with disabilities have access to an education, employment and support to participate in their communities has been a priority of mine, and I've been pleased to see how various state agencies have worked together to accomplish this goal.

The work of the Employment First Task Force has been vital to this effort. The collaboration between public and private partners has allowed the state to align supports, leverage all available resources, and work together to measure the results.

As governor, I've been able to see the results firsthand, from having a student intern with a developmental disability working in my constituent services office, to touring a grocery store that provides real-life work experience for students with disabilities transitioning out of high school. The programs that support these individuals are truly making a difference in their lives. In turn, these individuals are making valuable contributions to their employers, customers and communities.

It's been a privilege to see the success of these programs over the past eight years, and I hope this important work continues long after I leave office, as there is still much to be done. I look forward to continuing to watch the Employment First philosophy grow and will always be a fervent supporter of this critical effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature of Bill Haslam in dark ink, written in a cursive style.

Bill Haslam
Governor of Tennessee

EXPECT EMPLOYMENT

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EMPLOYMENT FIRST Partner Agencies

Department of
**Intellectual &
Developmental Disabilities**

Department of
**Labor & Workforce
Development**

Department of
Human Services

Department of
Education

Division of
TennCare

Department of
**Mental Health &
Substance Abuse Services**

Council on
Developmental Disabilities

Department of
**Economic &
Community Development**

Department of
Health

 VANDERBILT KENNEDY CENTER

 **DISABILITY
RIGHTS TN**


The Arc.
Tennessee

“For many people, the act of obtaining a job is not the end of the road, rather the beginning of a career path, the continuation on a journey to independence, and ultimately the hope for a better life.”

The fifth annual Expect Employment report also marks the final progress report for the Employment First Task Force during the Haslam administration. This task force would like to collectively thank the governor for making employment for people with disabilities a priority during his administration. Many of the strides made by people with disabilities and state agencies on behalf of people with disabilities would not have been possible without the support and awareness provided by the governor for this important initiative.

That support started in 2013, when Gov. Bill Haslam signed Executive Order No. 28. This executive order designated Tennessee as an Employment First State and called for a task force to be convened to identify and remove barriers to employment for people with disabilities. Starting in fall 2013, the Employment First Task Force was formed and began to meet quarterly to fulfill its charge.

The task force is comprised of people with disabilities, their families, state agencies who provide supports for people with disabilities, advocacy groups and other stakeholders who have a common mission of improving employment outcomes for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, physical disabilities, behavioral health diagnoses including mental illness, substance abuse disorders, and co-occurring disorders, and other disabilities.

The task force created its first strategic plan after a year spent in conversations with community members including people with disabilities, their families, employers, and providers to identify barriers and possible solutions. After two years of work on the initial strategic plan, a new plan was created to recognize the progress already made and identify new areas where improvement is needed.

The task force has completed year two of the three-year plan, and has amended the plan to reflect the changing landscape and emerging challenges that arise. These include the direct support professional workforce crisis and the task of integrating individual agency data to understand the employment landscape for people with disabilities from a statewide lens.

This fifth annual report to the governor continues to document the task force’s progress as identified in the five goals outlined in the strategic plan. Furthermore, this report continues to highlight the people behind the numbers who have overcome barriers and other challenges to achieve their goals in competitive, integrated employment. These stories show that there is no common path to employment for people with disabilities, and that each person’s journey is unique. It’s important to highlight that for many people, the act of obtaining a job is not the end of the road, rather the beginning of a career path, the continuation on a journey to independence, and ultimately the hope for a better life.

The task force will continue its collaborative work into the next administration to address the remaining challenges and to ensure everyone with a disability who wants a job has the opportunity to have one.

Goal 1

Strengthening Coordination



Path to Employment

The stories featured in this report are those of real Tennesseans and their journey to reaching their employment goals.



meet DAVID

Advocating for the Right Fit: David's Path

Between the nearly rhythmic beeps of the cash register and the rustling of plastic bags, David Haggard sends his customers off with neatly packed groceries, well wishes and a smile. He works at a Kroger in Jackson, Tennessee. When the registers quiet down, Haggard steps away to gather carts in the parking lot or he restocks the shelves with his colleagues.

It was the closure of Madison Haywood Developmental Services' workshop that pushed Haggard to find the job and wage he always wanted.

"I came here because I love it and I love staying busy," he explained. "I like to be out on my own like I am here. My staff don't have to be there with me."

Haggard was employed at the sheltered workshop and held a second job for years to support his independence. He found his new job after his former employer denied his request for more hours and more pay.

"He wasn't miserable at his old job, he will tell you that, but it was just the hours. They couldn't give him any more hours. So, David started looking on his own and found another job," Rance Thetford, MHDS Manager of Supported Employment, said.

Haggard's support staff at Madison Haywood believes the workshops' closure has helped him, and other people supported there, grow and reach for bigger employment goals in integrated, community settings.



David's Story

CHECK THIS OUT!

THIS STORY CAN ALSO BE VIEWED. SIMPLY
SCAN THE QR CODE TO ENJOY THE VIDEO.

GOAL 1

Objective

Collect, analyze, and integrate employment data of people with disabilities

A major focus since the inception of the Employment First Task Force has been on improving the quality and scope of data collected by state agencies related to the employment of people with disabilities. In turn, state agencies have increased their data collection efforts over the past five years and have made huge strides in this area. The benefits of improved efforts include a better understanding of the impact of various programs dedicated to improving employment outcomes. This data can be used not only to determine the efficacy of different strategies, but also pinpoint areas that are seeing highly successful outcomes as well as areas that are not progressing as rapidly as expected. Through that data analysis, agencies can make informed decisions to set goals and benchmarks, highlight success areas, and direct resources where needed.

The first iteration of integrating departmental data was launched through the Employment First Partnership Data Dashboard by TennesseeWorks. This brought together data from state agencies including the Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (DIDD), the Department of Human Services—Vocational Rehabilitation (DHS/VR), the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (TDMHSAS), the Department of Education (DOE), and the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center (VKC). This dashboard continues to serve as a hub for much of the employment data collected statewide.

Integrating the various departmental data to understand the statewide picture for all Tennesseans with disabilities has continued to be a challenge. The Vanderbilt Kennedy Center has been working to establish state-level employment goals that would extend beyond any one agency, would provide timely perspective on the statewide employment landscape, and would be trackable over time. The hope is to establish a goal that addresses the employment gap, which is the gap between the employment rates of people with and without disabilities. Another goal will address the number of adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities entering the workforce by combining data collected through DIDD, TennCare's Employment and Community First CHOICES program, Vocational Rehabilitation and other sources. This effort is in the beginning stages, and the Employment First Task Force is hopeful future reports will indicate progress in this very important area.

CHECK THIS OUT!

VIEW THE INTERACTIVE DATA DASHBOARD BY SCANNING THE QR CODE!



Employment and Disability

By The Numbers

In this section of our website, we present findings from multiple Tennessee projects that each provide important insights into the current employment landscape and suggest possible pathways for making change. We also integrate data from other sources that provide a snapshot of employment outcomes for Tennesseans with disabilities.



All Tennesseans



75% of all Tennesseans are employed

Tennesseans With Disabilities



28% of Tennesseans with disabilities are employed

Click here for more data on the current employment landscape for Tennesseans with disabilities

What Do Teachers Need?

Topics Educators Want More Resources On Related to Transition Planning

56% Using Assessment

53% Building Career Awareness

36% Pathways to Postsecondary

29% Student-Led IEP

15% Creating Student Profiles

Click here for more data from our educator survey

Click here to view tips for transition success from Tennessee educators



Click below to watch a Tennessee family discuss why employment is important for their family member.



What Matters Most to Families?

83% of families consider some type of employment in the community to be important.

75% of families consider some type of postsecondary education to be important.

71% of families consider some type of community living option to be important.

Click here for more data from our family survey

What Concerns Do Families Have For Their Son or Daughter Working in the Community?

- 1 Safety concerns
- 2 Lack of acceptance or understanding from others
- 3 Insufficient supervision

How Many Individuals Participate in Integrated Employment Services Provided by DIDD?

19% of individuals who receive services participate in integrated employment, including work activities with

GOAL 1

Objective

Assess impact of interagency MOUs that promote employment for people with disabilities.

Another goal set forth for the Employment First Task Force in Executive Order No. 28 was the need to identify best practices and effective partnerships among state agencies as a way of maximizing existing resources. Through the work of the task force, many state agencies are now working in collaboration on programs making an impact on employment outcomes for people with disabilities. Over the past five years, these efforts to collaborate have resulted in several memorandums of understanding (MOU) between state agencies that outline how, through clear delineation of roles, responsibilities and, where applicable, funding sources, the agencies will work in collaboration to achieve a person's employment goal in an effective and efficient manner.

In 2017, to support the employment goals of the Employment and Community First CHOICES program, TennCare and the Department of Human Services—Vocational Rehabilitation (DHS/VR) entered into a MOU to provide high quality employment services that lead to competitive integrated employment in a non-duplicative manner. The MOU outlines the roles of each agency, which includes VR Counselors and the three managed care organizations (MCOs) contracted with TennCare to administer the program.

Entering the second year of this interagency agreement, the partners set out to update the training and materials based on lessons learned from the first year. Joint training on the updated materials was conducted in six locations across the state in early 2018. More than 250 MCO support coordinators and VR counselors across the state participated in the training. In addition, both agencies participate in an implementation workgroup to ensure the MOU is successfully implemented, with regional staff members playing an important role in the discussions to help identify potential challenges and brainstorm opportunities for improvement.

Another successful collaboration between state agencies is through the partnership between the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (DMHSAS) and DHS/VR for the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) Supported Employment Program. This model of supported employment has been very successful in helping persons with behavioral health disorders including mental illness, substance abuse, and co-occurring disorders obtain competitive integrated employment. Since its inception, the program has grown to 13 IPS Supported Employment sites across the state. An interagency agreement between DMHSAS and DHS/VR was established in September 2017 to strengthen the collaboration between the two agencies in the area of developing, expanding, and improving opportunities for competitive integrated employment for Tennesseans living with disabilities including mental health and/or substance abuse issues.

In FY 2018, IPS Supported Employment has served 956 people, with 26 percent of those served placed in competitive integrated employment for more than 90 days.

Tennessee's efforts received a further boost when in May 2018 the state cohosted the 14th Annual Meeting of the International IPS Learning Community in Franklin. Tennessee shared its IPS Supported Employment journey during a presentation highlighting its growth and successes. In addition, the IHOP in Oak Ridge was recognized with an employer award during the conference.

The IPS Supported Employment partnership continues to grow, with DIDD joining the two agencies to work on a pilot to implement the IPS model with individuals who have a dual diagnosis of an intellectual and/or developmental disability and mental illness. This pilot showcases the cross-agency collaboration Tennessee has emphasized with the provider, Frontier Health, receiving support and resources from a DMHSAS statewide IPS Supported Employment trainer, outcome-based payments through its letter of agreement with VR, and long-term supported employment funding through DIDD. The 18-month pilot is still ongoing with five people participating. The goal is to identify strengths, challenges, and lessons learned, as well as make suggestions for future applications of IPS Supported Employment in Tennessee and on a national level for this specific population.

As the state implements its state plan for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the Department of Education and DHS/VR have established an MOU on the provision of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). These five pre-employment transition services allow for students between the ages of 14-22 to receive education, training, and work experiences while still in the supportive high school environment. The MOU clearly identifies the roles and responsibilities of each entity and the shared responsibilities between the two. The agencies conducted four joint training sessions for staff on the agreement and the pre-employment transition services available to students with disabilities.

Finally, the Council on Developmental Disabilities manages an MOU among eight state agencies in an effort to coordinate and streamline employment services for youth transitioning out of high school, specifically. First signed in 2014, the group continues to monitor its progress annually. In 2018, the Council led a comprehensive update that resulted in significant edits and three new signatory agencies.

meet SHERIKA



Sherika's Story

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THE VIDEO.

"Pathways" to Employment: Sherika's Path

For Sherika Walker, Individual Placement and Support (IPS) Supported Employment unlocked the doors to full time employment and helped her provide for her children.

"I have come a very long way from where I'm at now. At first, I felt like I wanted to give up," Walker said. "I couldn't keep a job. I didn't have a car. I couldn't drive. I didn't know how. And I didn't want to be that single mother where I was just going to give up on life."

Walker's bouts with depression affected her ability to be the mother she wanted to be. Through her interaction with Pathways Behavioral Health in Jackson, Walker expressed desire to work and joined the IPS Supported Employment program.

"Some of the reasons that she wanted to work at the time was to be more productive. The kids were all in school now, and she wanted to get out of the house," said Marie Maxie, Pathways IPS Supported Employment Supervisor and Coordinator. "She was staying depressed a lot, so she said that would be another way that would deal with the depression if she could just get out and do something and look forward to that."

Working through the steps of IPS Supported Employment, Walker and her team identified several job placements, but for one reason or another, they weren't the right fit. They finally landed on a job with Staff Management | SMX which handles staffing at the Kellogg plant that makes Pringles potato chips.

Walker couldn't be happier.

"She's working 40 plus hours a week, and she loves her work. She loves the coworkers," said Maxie.

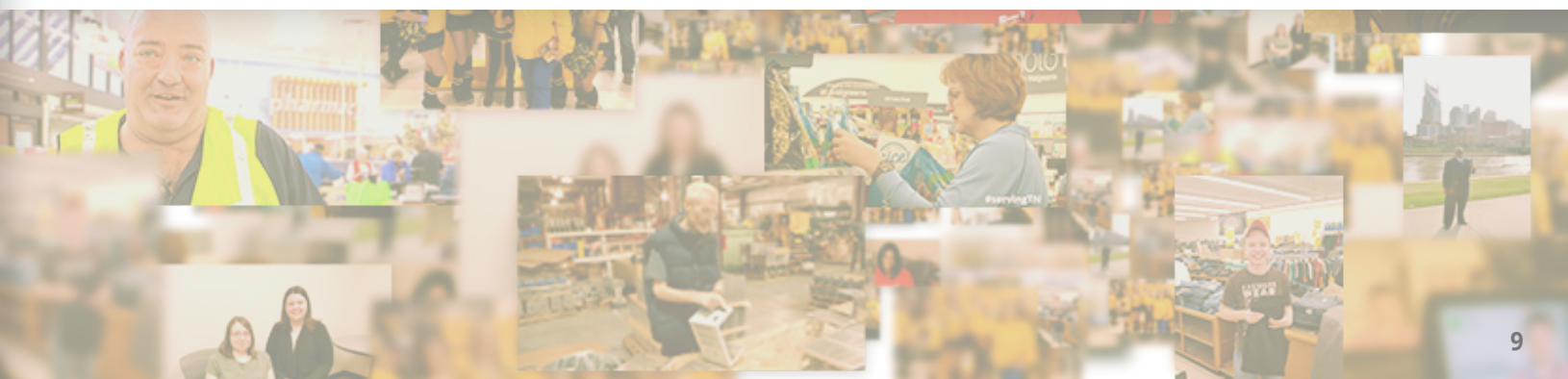
"We have a wonderful time. We talk, laugh, and joke. That's what makes the time go by fast," said Walker.

"She's worked hard. She's done great. She's one of my best associates," said Maurice Reed, Account Supervisor with Staff Management | SMX.

After more than a year on the job, what's next for Walker? She has aspirations to be a homeowner.

"My goal is to continue to work there and maybe one day be able to buy a house and start going on vacations with my kids," said Walker. "I don't want them to ever give up on anything. I want them to achieve their goals also."

Path to Employment



GOAL 1

Objective

Track implementation of WIOA Combined State Plan sections focused on people with disabilities

In 2016, Tennessee submitted a Combined State Plan to meet the requirements set forth in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The Combined State Plan encompasses many areas, including items that specifically relate to the employment of persons with disabilities.

The provision of Pre-ETS, as mentioned in the MOU section previously, is just one way the Combined State Plan addresses how Tennessee will meet the requirements of WIOA. Through the partnership of DHS/VR, the Department of Education and Local Education Agencies, students as young as 14 have the option to choose from five services including:

- Job Exploration and Counseling
- Work-Based Learning Experiences
- Counseling on Post-Secondary Training and Education Opportunities
- Workplace Readiness Instruction
- Self-Advocacy Training

As awareness of Pre-ETS has increased, as well as personnel and resources dedicated to the delivery of these services, so has utilization of such services. During the 2016-17 fiscal year, 1,964 Pre-ETS services were provided to students across the state. Through May 2018, more than 10,000 Pre-ETS services were provided in the 2017-18 fiscal year. This represents a 500 percent increase over the previous year.

Recently, DHS/VR entered into a three-year partnership with Vanderbilt University to develop online training, professional development, and practical resources for the provision of Pre-ETS. This new partnership includes the development of online training modules for VR counselors, other professionals, and youth with disabilities. It also includes annual regional trainings, data collection, and evaluation efforts.

Another area of WIOA that concentrates on disability services is a limitation on the use of subminimum wage under 14(c) certificates (under Section 14(c) of the federal Fair Labor Standards Act), which allow employers to pay less than the minimum wage to their employees with disabilities, according to their speed and productivity. Tennessee has made significant headway in encouraging its service providers—which are eligible to obtain 14(c) certificates—to end the practice of paying subminimum wages. According to the United States Department of Labor, as of April 1, 2018, there are no private businesses in Tennessee that hold 14(c) certificates, and 40 community rehabilitation providers (CRP) that hold 14(c) certificates, down from 63 in 2016. This represents significant progress made through technical assistance from the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) to transition people working in sheltered workshops into competitive integrated employment. It also highlights the positive impact of the federal HCBS Settings Rule and Tennessee's collaborative process for developing and implementing the Statewide Transition Plan. Provider self-assessments, Individual Experience Assessments, heightened scrutiny reviews, and site-specific transition plans developed with DIDD support and assistance from TennCare and TennCare's contracted MCOs have led to the closure of some segregated day settings, and the transition of a number of individuals formerly employed in sheltered workshops into competitive integrated employment.



meet
KRISTIE



Kristie's Story

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From Workshop to Walgreens: Kristie's Path

Path to Employment

Tennesseans with disabilities are finding meaningful, integrated employment opportunities across the state following the closures of long-standing, sheltered workshops. Kristie Brooks was employed as a machinist at Madison Haywood Developmental Services in Jackson, Tennessee, for years. Each shift, she wore headphones to focus on her work and drown out unpleasant noise from the plant.

When the workshop closed its doors, Brooks and her support staff searched for a job that she would enjoy and where she could apply her unique abilities and strengths. She found the perfect fit just a few streets away from Madison Haywood at a Walgreens. The employer quickly realized her potential, and she was hired on to stock shelves and the cooler in the store.

"Kristie's close to six feet tall, and nobody could reach the top shelves. It worked out perfectly for her, and she didn't have to give up something that she had done, like listening to music for 20 years out here," Nora Buckley, Madison Haywood Assistant Executive Director, said.

Now Brooks says she continues to learn new skills and is growing her network in her own community, "My favorite part of the job is making money, of course. I love all of my co-workers. They feel like a family to me. To tell you the truth, I do love it and I like helping people."



GOAL 1

Objective

Propose policies, regulations, legislation, and funding that increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities

One of the highest priorities for people supported, advocacy groups, and many participants on the Employment First Task Force this legislative session was to strengthen Tennessee's conservatorship law and protect decision-making rights for all Tennesseans. This goal was accomplished through the passage of Tennessee's "Supported Decision Making" law. Supported Decision Making is a best practice that allows persons with disabilities to retain their decision-making capacity by choosing trusted people to support them in making choices. Those "trusted people" might be friends, family members, or professionals who agree to help a person with a disability understand and carefully consider decisions and then effectively communicate them. This is an important tool people can use to make choices about when, where, how and how often they work. During 2018, the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities led efforts to help inform and educate policymakers about Supported Decision Making. One major accomplishment was the passage of a Supported Decision Making bill, sponsored by Sen. Becky Massey and Rep. Mike Carter and signed by Gov. Haslam, which strengthens the state's conservatorship laws. A consortium of disability organizations, led by The Arc Tennessee and the Council on Developmental Disabilities, contributed to this effort.

With the support of national experts, the Council has developed training about Supported Decision Making and is working with partners to educate people with disabilities and their families about this new option and how to utilize it. This included several sessions with national expert Jonathan Martinis during the 2018 Partners in Education statewide conference for special educators. He also conducted several sessions for people, families and other stakeholders during the annual Tennessee Disability MegaConference.

Tennessee also continues to expand its use of ABLE TN accounts, the state's Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) program which was provided through federal and state legislation. ABLE TN accounts allow people with disabilities a savings option that does not impact their eligibility for federal means-tested benefits. Many stakeholders, including members of the Employment Task Force, feel this has helped resolve a major barrier to employment for many people with disabilities, who worried earnings from a job would jeopardize their eligibility for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Medicaid, which many people depend on to support and maintain those jobs.

Launched in June 2016, ABLE TN is administered by the Tennessee Department of Treasury under the leadership of Treasurer David H. Lillard, Jr. As of June 2018, ABLE TN had approximately 1,785 accounts totaling more than \$11 million in assets. In the two years the program has been open, account holders have made a low rate of withdrawals, demonstrating that beneficiaries in the program are taking full advantage of ABLE TN as a long-term savings and investment vehicle.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, which became public law on December 22, 2017, brought enhancements to ABLE programs, supporting individuals with disabilities who are employed. One of the greatest enhancements is the increase of the annual contribution limit for ABLE programs from \$14,000 to \$15,000 for 2018. Additionally, savings in a 529 account can now be rolled over into an ABLE account subject to the annual contribution limit until January 1, 2026. Finally, until January 1, 2026, the law permits ABLE programs to allow ABLE participants to contribute their employment income to their ABLE accounts in excess of the \$15,000 annual contribution limit, so long as the participant doesn't participate in their employer's retirement plan and the contributions from income do not exceed the federal poverty level for an individual for the prior calendar year.

GOAL 1

Objective

Assess the impact of the Employment and Community First CHOICES Program

The Employment and Community First CHOICES program was launched two years ago to provide supports for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities with an emphasis on promoting and supporting competitive, integrated employment. The program includes three benefit groups designed to support people in meeting their personal goals for employment and community participation. This program includes an array of 14 different employment services designed to give people opportunities to explore what employment looks like and what types of jobs they may be interested in. After that process, the Employment and Community First CHOICES program then provides supports necessary to obtain and maintain employment as well as advance in their careers.

As of June 30, 2018, the two-year mark of the program, just over 2,500 people were enrolled in the program, including 1,606 working age individuals. Of those working age individuals, 18% worked in competitive,

integrated employment. On average, workers earn nearly \$8.50 per hour and work nearly 17 hours a week. Of the working age individuals who are not yet employed, 89% have a goal to obtain, maintain, explore, or advance in competitive, integrated employment.

The Division of TennCare is using the experiences gained through the first two years of the program to enhance other LTSS programs in the state. This includes incorporating the person-centered support plan template with employment-focused questions within the CHOICES program, a long term services and supports program for adults with physical disabilities as well as adults over the age of 65. In addition, the pre-employment services that have been very successful in the Employment and Community First CHOICES program are being added to the 1915(c) waivers operated by DIDD to provide opportunities for people within those waivers to explore the potential of employment.



Andrea's Story

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Discovering the Right Job: Andrea's Path

Path to Employment

Prior to her enrollment in Employment and Community First CHOICES, Andrea did not leave her home very often and had no natural supports outside of her parents. She always hoped for a job and to live on her own. She received employment supports through the "Discovery" process (meant to identify a person's strengths, skills, and preferences) through Best Buddies Tennessee where they found out she had great organizational skills, artistic talent and a love for the Nashville Predators hockey team. She was able to secure a job at HealthStream, a large health care company, working in the Human Resources department organizing files. Coworkers noticed her creativity and now have her working on drawings for their newsletters.

She also has a second job at Bridgestone Arena working during the Predators games. She loves this side job because she gets to watch the games and meet other fans (and even mingle with some of the cheerleaders and players). She recently moved into an apartment, is learning independent living skills and how to use Uber to get to work and meet up with her friends. Her life has changed significantly for the better.

GOAL 1

Objective

Propose policies, regulations, legislation, and funding that increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities

A key barrier to providing employment services to people with disabilities has been the national workforce shortage of direct support professionals (DSPs). This shortage is being felt in all areas of service provision, and provider agencies across Tennessee are struggling to recruit and retain high-quality direct support professionals in an improved economy.

A major factor in the DSP workforce shortage is low wages. According to the 2018 National Core Indicators Staff Stability Survey, a voluntary survey of intellectual and developmental disability service providers, Tennessee ranked last in average wages for DSPs at \$9.47 an hour in 2016. The second closest state was Alabama at \$9.53, with the other participating states exceeding a \$10.00 average hourly wage. Recognizing the need to raise wages, Governor Haslam and the General Assembly have appropriated provider rate increases four of the past five fiscal years, bringing the average DSP wage in the DIDD provider rate methodology from \$8.50 an hour to \$9.15. For fiscal year 2019, the General Assembly has appropriated approximately \$50 million in a combination of recurring and non-recurring funding to raise the average hourly DSP wage in the DIDD rate methodology to \$10.00. This is a significant increase designed to attract more high-quality candidates on the front lines of providing supports to assist people in living the lives they envision for themselves. There is still work to be done to ensure wage parity across intersecting state support programs with common goals, but differing rates for staff pay.

TennCare's Long Term Services and Supports Programs are also making a substantial investment in the creation of a high quality, competency-based education and training curriculum for which people in the field will be able to earn college credit, complete a post-secondary certificate, and apply these credits towards a new associate's degree. The new program will provide an education path for direct support professionals as well as a career path as they continue to build competencies to access more advanced jobs and higher wages. Critical to the program's success will be the ability to ensure that wages are increased as DSPs increase their level of training and competency, and upon completing the certification program.

TennCare is also working with providers to help them better recruit and retain qualified staff by engaging a national subject matter expert (SME) on workforce recruitment and retention. The intent is to engage SMEs to provide training, consultation and technical assistance

to providers to support their adoption of key practices that—when coupled with higher wages—have been shown to result in effective recruitment and increased retention. These include more effective recruitment and onboarding strategies, targeted marketing, realistic job previews, structured behavioral interviewing, and early access to mentoring by more experienced staff.

Another strategy DIDD continues to employ is broader use of Enabling Technologies. These technologies, now more accessible and affordable than at any time previous, allow persons supported to achieve greater levels of independence while also serving to reduce reliance on paid staff. The department has received recurring funding to expand Enabling Technology and where appropriate is utilizing sensor, remote and mobile application technology to better support people in realizing their goals for living independently. This initiative, as well as TennCare's investment in competency-based education and training, directly align with recommendations made by the President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities in its 2017 report about the direct support professional workforce crisis and its impact on people with disabilities.

While this continues to be a crisis all across the nation, the hope is that higher wages, establishing a career path, supporting providers to utilize best practices and increasing the use of enabling technology will improve recruitment, retention and increase independence, which ultimately impacts the quality of life of thousands of Tennesseans with disabilities.

EMPLOYMENT FIRST STATE LEADERSHIP MENTORING PROGRAM

Tennessee continues its participation in the Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program (EFSLMP) offered through the United States Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP). The Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities has served as the core state lead to facilitate various projects and initiatives that include the collaboration of several state departments as well as subject matter experts provided through EFSLMP. Over the past year, the focus has been on business engagement (See Goal 3) and the following areas:

PROVIDER TRANSFORMATION

Through EFSLMP, Tennessee typically meets with subject matter experts (SMEs) from states around the country and matches them with service providers undergoing Provider Transformation, which is the process of transitioning from primarily facility-based services to primarily employment and community-based services. This year, Tennessee is using EFSLMP to create a state-funded program to sustain Provider Transformation efforts for years to come. To this end, DIDD created the Tennessee Employment First Leadership Initiative (TEFLI), which will identify SMEs within Tennessee and equip them with the skills and tools to mentor other providers undergoing Provider Transformation. Initial training on TEFLI is scheduled for August 2018.

IPS SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT FUNDING

As mentioned in the MOU section, the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) Supported Employment program is growing throughout the state. Tennessee is participating in another EFSLMP program called Vision Quest, which brings together representatives from the Division of TennCare, DHS/ VR, and DMHSAS. The goal of this group is to identify barriers preventing IPS Supported Employment providers from accessing funding available through TennCare, as well as provide information and training to increase the utilization rate.

IMPROVING FLEXIBILITY, EXPLORING EMPLOYMENT

Approximately 7,800 people with intellectual disabilities receive supports through three Home and Community Based Services waivers operated by the Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (DIDD). Currently, nearly 18 percent of working age persons in the waiver are in competitive, integrated employment. However, a recent National Core Indicators (NCI) survey of persons in the 1915(c) waivers indicates that more than one third of those who do not currently have a job in the community want one. To that end, DIDD has set an ambitious goal to double its employment rate from a baseline of 16 percent in April 2017 to 32 percent by 2022.

To support this goal, DIDD, in collaboration with the Division of TennCare, is proposing significant changes to employment and day services in its three waivers. These changes are designed to provide more choice and flexibility in how a person spends his or her day, as well as more opportunities to explore employment through the addition of pre-employment services called Exploration, Discovery and Job Development. These services will help a person decide if he or she wants to work, what kind of job he or she would like and be good at, and assist in obtaining a job. The changes will also align financial incentives with policy goals, including incentivizing and rewarding best-practice job coaching through a tiered and phased payment structure that encourages increased independence in the workplace, and quality incentive payments for supported employment providers that support people working in competitive integrated employment at least 15 hours a week.

If approved by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the targeted effective date is April 2019.

meet ALYSSA



Alyssa's Story

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THE VIDEO.

Persistence Pays Off—Alyssa's Path

Alyssa Clements was initially made aware of Vocational Rehabilitation in 2011 when a VR Counselor visited her in high school and noticed her working in the front office. The VR Counselor spoke with Clements about Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and she ultimately decided to apply her last semester of her senior year of high school.

Clements has known from a very early age that she wanted to be a meteorologist. It was determined through school records and a vocational evaluation that she had the ability to succeed in a demanding meteorology program. Clements wanted to attend the University of Oklahoma to receive her degree, so she worked with her VR Counselor to obtain the necessary approvals to attend school out of state. Clements enrolled in the University of Oklahoma and began her studies in the fall of 2011. Clements was always very diligent in contacting and communicating with her VR Counselor, including submitting the necessary paperwork needed every semester for continued support. Significant guidance and counseling was provided by the VR Counselor during Clements time at the University of Oklahoma. Clements graduated from the University of Oklahoma in May 2016 with a 3.41 GPA.

Clements returned home to Tullahoma in May 2016 and began working with the VR Business Employment Consultant (BEC) on job searching. The BEC immediately began assisting Clements with creating resumes and identifying job leads. Clements was not opposed to relocating as she had done it when she moved to Oklahoma but she had several barriers to overcome. One of her barriers was a lack of transportation, as she relies on others for transportation or a public transportation system. Clements applied for countless jobs during her two-year job search and had numerous interviews, but a job offer didn't come. Clements had always focused on her studies, which left no time for work so Clements was encouraged by her VR Counselor and the BEC to find a part-time job to gain valuable work experience and references. Clements began working for Applebee's.

Clements never lost sight of her goal of becoming a meteorologist, even though many times it seemed that her goal would never come true. There were several points where Clements herself questioned why the job search was so hard, but she continued to push through, listening to the advice and guidance the BEC provided during those difficult times. Clements again received significant guidance and counseling from her VR Counselor as well as the BEC during the job search phase. In December 2017, the National Weather Service released 35 entry level meteorology jobs across the United States, and Clements applied for every job. Clements had numerous interviews with the National Weather Service in early 2018 and her goal of becoming a meteorologist seemed closer to coming true. She interviewed with the National Weather Service out of Albuquerque, New Mexico and was ultimately offered a job. She began working on May 29, 2018, and will be followed along by the VR Counselor and BEC for her first 90 days of employment to ensure that her transition goes smoothly, and she has access to resources she needs to succeed over 1,200 miles from home. Clements truly is a success as she has accomplished her goal of becoming the meteorologist she dreamed of being since a young age also while overcoming numerous barriers that never stopped her.

Goal 2

Build a shared community
commitment to Employment First

GOAL 2

Objective

Build a shared community commitment to Employment First

STATE AGENCY EMPLOYMENT ROUNDTABLE

For more than 10 years, the Council on Developmental Disabilities has been convening state agencies to discuss transition services for students with disabilities. Today, the group calls itself the “Employment Roundtable” because the focus has broadened to employment services for school age individuals and beyond. The group has expanded to include more than 25 representatives from 11 state agencies who meet every month.

From the start, three fundamental goals have guided the group, which also contribute to the state’s Employment First Strategic Plan:

- Increase communication across agencies;
- Do a better job of supporting individuals with their employment goals, especially as they move through a complex service system; and
- Increase employment outcomes among people with developmental disabilities across Tennessee.

EMPLOYMENT FIRST COMMUNICATIONS GROUP

Reaching out to people with disabilities and their families is an important part of the Employment First Task Force strategic plan. Misconceptions about work-- including a person’s capability of holding a community job, safety and feasibility-- still exist among people and their families. To strengthen coordination amongst agencies and partners, unify the message and disseminate it throughout various communications channels, the Employment First Communications Workgroup was formed in 2015. Communications professionals from Vanderbilt Kennedy Center, the Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, the Department of Human Services, The Arc Tennessee, and the Council on Developmental Disabilities meet quarterly to share updates, learn effective communications strategies for reaching people with disabilities, and strategize on how to ensure the message of Employment First is spread to a wide audience of Tennesseans including people with disabilities, their families, and potential employers.

The two signature accomplishments for the workgroup occur during National Disability Employment Awareness Month in October. The group collaborates on the “Hire My Strengths” social media campaign that aims to promote awareness about the diverse strengths people with disabilities can bring to a job. This month-long campaign has stretched beyond the borders of Tennessee, and has seen participation from other national groups. The campaign, along with other important messages about Employment First, was featured during a national Twitter conversation hosted by the Public Relations Society of America in October 2017. Both the Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and SRVS, a provider agency supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in West Tennessee, participated on the chat and shared best practices for communications about disability topics with public relations professionals across the nation.

The second accomplishment is the annual presentation of the Expect Employment report to the governor. In 2017, the event took place in Kingsport, where the governor toured a Food City grocery store location, a Transition School to Work site for Dobyns-Bennett High School, and met with several students who gained real-world job skills at the store. The event was attended by state lawmakers, community leaders, employers and was covered by the local media.

The workgroup continues to partner on other events throughout the year, including Disability Day on the Hill and Tennessee Disability MegaConference. In addition, all agencies have their own initiatives to raise awareness around employment issues for individuals with disabilities and those efforts are shared and spread among all partner agencies.



EMPLOYMENT VIDEOS

Since 2015, the Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities has produced a highly successful video campaign called #Way2Work. The videos highlight Tennesseans with disabilities who have a variety of careers at businesses across the state. This past year, #Way2Work videos highlighted a Nashville woman who worked in HR for a health company and volunteered with the Nashville Predators and two videos about people who left a sheltered workshop and found rewarding jobs in the community.

In addition, TennesseeWorks continues to share videos on the TennesseeWorks and TransitionTennessee websites. In the past year the Department of Human Services and the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services invested in video equipment and have produced several stories featuring people with disabilities and programs that have supported them in finding community jobs. This increase in video resources is a benefit in continuing to raise awareness about the contributions of people with disabilities to their employers and their communities.

PUBLICATIONS

The Council on Developmental Disabilities publishes their Breaking Ground magazine bimonthly and continues to share valuable information about employment including people's job stories, state initiatives geared towards employment, innovative approaches, and agencies that have experienced success. The magazine is distributed statewide by mail and email to approximately 5,000 subscribers and also distributed at community events. During the past year, employment-related articles included stories about Customized Employment, Project SEARCH, Lipscomb IDEAL students interning at state agencies, and the Governor's Office of Diversity Business Enterprise Program expanding to serve business owners with disabilities.

TennesseeWorks also continues to publish its "Rise to Work" blog, which explores key points that lead to successful employment for people with disabilities. The blogs also feature viewpoints from agencies that have been successful with supporting employment for people they serve, as well as passing on important employment-related changes and updates from state agencies. The most popular posts from the past year included the proposed changes to Employment and Day Services in the 1915(c) waivers, the Dignity of Risk, and the DSP Workforce Crisis.

THINK EMPLOYMENT SUMMIT

In September 2017, TennesseeWorks partnered with the Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and the Council on Developmental Disabilities through their Supporting Families Community of Practice initiative to offer its annual "Think Employment" Summit at the Music City Center. This year's summit featured a track for family members, state agencies, employers and other professionals and a separate track for students and adult self-advocates. Local school districts participated in the summit as well as dozens of self-advocates receiving DIDD services.

The summit also included several employer vendors who provided opportunities for students and self-advocates to gain experience through job interviews and gather information about various employers in the community. TennesseeWorks is planning on holding regional summits in 2019 to ensure students, families and community providers in other areas of the state have the opportunity to attend.

DRT LUNCHEON: RECOGNIZING EMPLOYMENT CHAMPIONS

Disability Rights Tennessee held its 4th Annual Disability Employment Awareness Luncheon during National Disability Employment Awareness Month. The event brought together over 300 stakeholders to bring awareness to the benefits of competitive integrated employment for Tennesseans with disabilities. This year's recipients of the annual Freedom Awards were Elise McMillan of Vanderbilt Kennedy Center and Gov. Bill Haslam. Jason Rogers, a student from Lipscomb IDEAL inclusive higher education program who interned with the governor, presented the award to Gov. Haslam for executive leadership in promoting employment and independent living for Tennesseans with disabilities.

Meg Lawrence from Microsoft was this year's keynote speaker and shared ways that the company is raising the bar on inclusive workplaces. Additionally, managers and employees from Tennessee shared their employment stories including Clancey Hopper, a self-advocate who works as a tour guide at the Grand Ole Opry and a member of the Council on Developmental Disabilities, and Aaron Baker of the AIM Center in Chattanooga.



GOAL 2

Objective

Build a shared community commitment to Employment First



2017 Enabling Tech Summit Video

SIMPLY SCAN THE QR CODE TO ENJOY THE VIDEO.

ENABLING TECHNOLOGY SUMMIT

In August 2017, the Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities officially launched its Enabling Technology program with a summit in Nashville. Enabling technology is the use of tech solutions including mobile applications, sensors, and tele-caregiving to support people with disabilities while promoting independence and community participation. Several technology options exist to provide continued support to people in community employment after support from a job coach has been faded out over time. Vendors showcased some of those options at the summit, including mobile technologies that can provide step-by-step job tasks for people with disabilities.

The first person in DIDD services to utilize Enabling Technology realized his dream of living independently in his own home when he moved with the support of technology in May 2018. Pay from his full-time job also allowed him to achieve this, and it is expected these technologies will soon be supporting more people at home and at work in the near future.



JOB INTERVIEW FAIR

In May 2018, the Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Middle Tennessee Regional Office partnered with provider agency Community Options to host a Job Interview Fair. The goal of the fair was to offer people supported by DIDD opportunities to practice their interviewing skills with community employers, and to further the connections between local provider agencies and employers.

DIDD providers in Middle Tennessee were invited to bring up to three people they support to participate in multiple mock job interviews. Local employers and Middle Regional staff conducted and evaluated the interviews, and then provided feedback on strengths and opportunities for improvement.

More than 80 people participated, including employers like Thornton's, Buffalo Wild Wings, and Penn Station. Not only did people have an opportunity to refine their skills in a no-pressure environment, but some of those mock interviews turned into real jobs for the attendees.

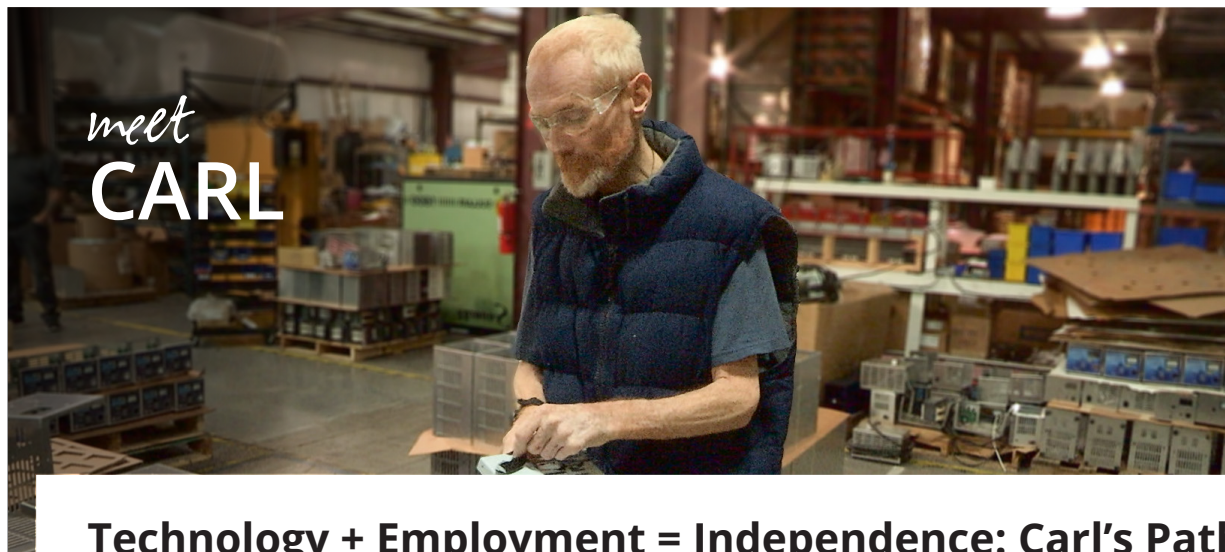


Job Interview Fair Video

SIMPLY SCAN THE QR CODE TO ENJOY THE VIDEO.

EMPLOYMENT AND COMMUNITY FIRST CHOICES FORUMS

The managed care organizations contracted with TennCare to administer services in the Employment and Community First CHOICES program hosted seven statewide forums for people supported in the program and their families. These free informative meetings provided opportunities for people to hear about employment, supported decision-making, community integration and independent living. The forums also included a panel of peers and family members receiving supports through the program. These forums allowed attendees to hear about how employment is impacting the lives of people in the program.



Carl's
Story

SIMPLY SCAN THE
QR CODE TO ENJOY
THE VIDEO.

Technology + Employment = Independence: Carl's Path

The first person to participate in the Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Enabling Technology Program moved in to his own home in May. Carl Lipford is supported by Core Services of Northeast Tennessee, and with the assistance of personalized technology from SimplyHome, the agency was finally able to help him realize his dream of living on his own.

For years Lipford was living with housemates in a community home in Johnson City. Through person-centered planning meetings at Core Services, his staff learned he wasn't happy with his living arrangements and they began identifying ways they could help him improve his self-reliance and achieve his goals for independence.

"When we heard about DIDD having the Enabling Technology test project, you know, Carl was the absolute first person that we thought about," Susan Arwood, Core Services Executive Director, said. "People don't want a lifetime of good services. People want a good life."

But without Lipford's job at a battery charger manufacturing company called Diversified Power International, none of it would be possible. His employment provides enough hours and pay to sustain an independent lifestyle by paying for rent, food, and other bills.

"Taking the white paper off of those things they put for cars, that's what I do," Lipford explained. "I like my job so much."

Now when you walk into his new home in his quiet neighborhood in Bristol, you don't immediately notice the smart technology hiding in the corners of each room. The sensor on his refrigerator is small and sits on the seal of the door. There's also a timed alarm in the kitchen to remind Lipford to turn off the stove. He even has an iPad with an app connected to his doorbells, so he and his staff can see who's visiting.

Core Services Program Coordinator Nicholas Filarelli says the people closest to Lipford believe he has never been happier, "Now that he is not constantly around people, he appreciates having visitors. I would say no matter how much credit you are giving somebody, they are more capable than you think they are."



Goal 3

Increase the number of employers that hire people with disabilities

GOAL 3

Objective

Cultivate Employment First champions among business leaders across Tennessee

One of the main focus areas over the past year for the Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program has been on Business Engagement. The goal has been to identify more effective ways of connecting employers with job candidates who have disabilities. The workgroup is made up of representatives from the Department of Economic and Community Development (ECD), Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD), DIDD, DHS/VR and TennesseeWorks. The group is bringing together Nashville-area employers and DIDD providers to discuss the possibility of partnership and identify resources employers would like when hiring people with disabilities. The goal of the workgroup is to identify and share best practices to help other businesses and service providers create long-lasting partnerships, and to ensure businesses have the resources they need to be successful in building a diverse workforce that includes people with disabilities.

Locally, groups of providers, employers and business leaders have formed employment consortiums to raise awareness of the benefits of hiring a person with a disability as well as provide information about employment opportunities to people who are supported in disability programs. The Knoxville Area Employment Consortium (KAEC) is composed of local representatives from state agencies, the City of Knoxville, and Knox County Schools along with providers, advocacy organizations, and model disability employment programs—all of the key entities needed to expand employment opportunities for people with disabilities at the table working together on a common goal. KAEC members meet monthly to plan initiatives and events, receive status reports on programs, and coordinate employer outreach and engagement. The KAEC establishes and coordinates employer partnerships to recruit, train, and retain employees with disabilities, and also provides a single point of contact for employers to request information or assistance regarding disability employment.

On a state level DIDD facilitates the State of Tennessee Employment Consortium (STEC) to share information and resources, engage in discussion and networking, and build a community dedicated to increasing employment opportunities for Tennesseans with disabilities. Members include representatives from state agencies, service providers, and other organizations focused on employment.



An Employment Milestone: Scott's Path

On July 1, 2018, Scott Finney celebrated an incredible milestone that few people reach – 30 years of employment with the same company! Finney was hired at The Arc Tennessee by Executive Director Roger Blue on July 1, 1988 to be the Assistant Director of Public Awareness and Information. And while organizations hire people every day – it has not always been common practice to hire a person with intellectual or developmental disabilities (I/DD) – let alone hire them for a full-time position back in 1988 when sheltered workshops were the most common employment option. For Roger Blue, the decision made perfect sense. The Arc Tennessee is an advocacy organization for people with I/DD and their families – who better to provide advocacy and increase awareness of the capabilities of people with I/DD than someone who can share his own personal story?

That is exactly what Finney has been doing ever since. Though his job title has changed over the years, and his responsibilities at the office have changed, Finney continues to be the “face of The Arc Tennessee.” His coworkers depend upon him to remember historical dates, handle a variety of administrative duties, do public speaking engagements, provide training, and so much more. Finney is the glue that holds the office together and is a valued member of The Arc Tennessee team. He works full-time and receives the same benefits as everyone else. When he retires, he will have Social Security and his retirement investment from all his years of employment.

As with most people, Finney gained work experience in other jobs prior to landing his “dream job.” He began his work career in a sheltered workshop. He also worked on a janitorial enclave. He wanted more, and his parents wanted more for him. The sheltered work provider helped him find his dream job with funding through Vocational Rehabilitation Services. Those early work experiences prepared him for the challenges he faces at The Arc Tennessee.

Finney is proof that high expectations, hard work and determination are keys to getting and keeping a job.

GOAL 3	Objective
	Create and expand partnerships with existing workforce initiatives

Job development is a key component of programs that work to support people with disabilities in finding community jobs. This includes building strong relationships with diverse employers in all corners of the state. Frontline staff of state agencies and contracted providers are oftentimes the driving force behind the partnerships with local employers. These staff have worked directly with job seekers with disabilities and understand their career goals, skills and strengths they can bring to the workplace.

Many of the programs that support people with disabilities and mental health diagnoses are growing, and so must the number of businesses willing to hire these jobseekers. The Individual Placement and Support Program, and supported employment services offered through both the 1915(c) waivers operated by DIDD and the Employment and Community First CHOICES program rely on job development to ensure a good fit for both the person and the employer.

During state fiscal year 2018, the Vocational Rehabilitation program's Business Services Unit (BSU) participated in intensive technical assistance provided by the Job-Driven Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center (JDVRTAC). The goal of the JDVRTAC is to improve the capacity of state VR agencies and associated rehabilitation professionals to work with employers and training providers as they develop partnerships that lead to increased opportunities for individuals with disabilities to engage in competitive employment. In Tennessee, key objectives included building agency capacity in working with the business community and strengthening training for staff focused on building and maintaining employer relations.

Through this investment of training and technical assistance provided by the JDVRTAC, the Vocational Rehabilitation program and its Business Services Unit is poised to further its engagement and support of Tennessee employers creating competitive integrated employment opportunities for people with disabilities across the state.

Given Tennessee's place at the heart of the southern automotive corridor, manufacturing is a critical sector throughout the state. To address this demand, DHS/VR's Tennessee Rehabilitation Center in Smyrna is expanding its existing manufacturing training program to offer the ACT WorkKeys, OSHA 10 safety instruction, and the Manufacturing Skills Standards Council Certified Production Technician (MSSC/CPT) program through an

innovative partnership and collaboration with the Department of Labor, Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT), and the Rutherford County Chamber of Commerce Manufacturing Council.

Through this partnership, an industry-driven curriculum will be designed and delivered that produces highly qualified, skilled, adaptive workers who will obtain recognized certifications and preferred credentials of Tennessee employers. This will assist the state in producing a more qualified workforce to meet the increasing demands of manufacturing employers in warehousing, storage, and distribution.

GOAL 3

Objective

Create additional partnerships between employers and school transition programs

Through grant contracts with local education agencies (LEAs), the DHS/VR program provides transition school to work opportunities for students with disabilities. The Transition School to Work (TSW) program focuses on the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to eligible and potentially eligible high school students with disabilities who are interested in employment after leaving high school. The goal is a smooth, seamless transition from high school to post-high school career development and/or employment. For example, students in Tullahoma City schools are gaining valuable work based learning experience through partnerships with local employers ranging from auto body and computer repair to veterinary medicine and carpentry.

In 2017-18, Transition School to Work grants increased to 38 serving 42 LEAs including Tennessee School for the Blind and Tennessee School for the Deaf. In sum the grants provided employment preparation activities to over 6,000 students in the 2017-2018 school year.

Project SEARCH is a one-year internship program for students with disabilities in their last year of high school or for young adults working with a disability provider. It is targeted for interns whose goal is competitive, integrated employment within their communities. Interns get hands on training, learn work skills, and have real-world opportunities to strengthen their independent living skills. The Tennessee Department of Human Services has helped implement the program in partnership with organizations across the state by providing Workplace Readiness Specialists, training, and technical assistance from the national Project SEARCH organization.

The Council on Developmental Disabilities brought this innovative internship model to Tennessee more than a decade ago. Now, there are currently 12 active Project SEARCH programs around the state:

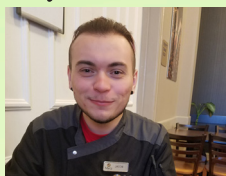
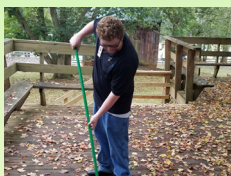
- Maryville College
partnership with Blount County Schools
- Downtown Sheraton Hotel
partnership with Shelby County Schools

- Le Bonheur Children's Hospital
partnership with Shelby County Schools
- West Tennessee Healthcare
partnership with Jackson-Madison Schools
- Vanderbilt Children's Hospital
*partnership with Progress, Inc., **
- Embassy Suites
partnership with Metro Nashville Public Schools
- Amerigroup
partnership with Progress, Inc.
- Montgomery County Government
partnership with Clarksville-Montgomery County Schools
- Embassy Suites
partnership with Rutherford County Schools
- East Tennessee Children's Hospital
partnership with Cerebral Palsy Center
- University of Tennessee Medical Center
*partnership with Breakthrough Corp., **
- Blue Cross Blue Shield
partnership with Hamilton County Schools

Project SEARCH programs continue to be highly successful in placing interns in employment, with one program maintaining a 100 percent employment rate for graduating interns.

As a way to further incentivize utilization of Project SEARCH and other successful employment internship programs including Walgreen's REDi (Retail Employees with Disabilities Initiative) program and the B.E.S.T. (Bridge to Employment in Service and Tourism) program and Next Steps at Vanderbilt University, the Division of TennCare has worked with managed care organizations to develop a new reimbursement rate for participants also enrolled in the Employment and Community First CHOICES program. Numerous youth have already been able to utilize this benefit to support their participation, which has resulted in some receiving successful offers of long-term employment, while others have gained valuable skills and experience that will support their continued journey toward competitive integrated employment.

Path to Employment



100% EMPLOYMENT THROUGH PROJECT SEARCH

Maryville College's Project SEARCH program has resulted in 100% successful employment outcomes for all of its interns since the program began.

Blount County Schools launched the program in the 2015-16 school year at William Blount High School with five interns enrolled. Students interned with Metz Culinary Management, which provides dining services at Maryville College. The interns had four rotation options: the Metz Café dining hall, the dish room, clerical work, and housekeeping. All interns proved to be very good at their jobs, and before the spring semester, Metz had inquired about hiring an intern. By the end of the semester, all five of the interns were hired within their communities and remain employed.

The following school year, the program expanded to include Heritage High School, seven more interns, and an additional Metz service rotation. All members of the Blount County Schools' intern class of 2016-17 were employed by April 2017 and continue to maintain employment.

In the 2017-18 school year, the Access Program joined the partnership as a community service provider. Currently five interns are enrolled and all have started their employment journey at five different employment sites.



Brad's
Story

SIMPLY SCAN THE
QR CODE TO ENJOY
THE VIDEO.

Internship at DIDD: Brad's Path

The state of Tennessee strives to be a model public employer for people with disabilities. Brad Bramlett joined DIDD's communications department in the spring as an intern from Lipscomb University's IDEAL post-secondary program for students with disabilities, with the dream of one-day becoming an anchor for local television news.

His interest in media began while he was anchoring a weekly newscast called Summit View as a student at Summit High School in Williamson County. During his internship at DIDD, he aimed to gain meaningful job skills in media relations and production before he entered the workforce the following summer. He took on relevant tasks like gathering articles for the department's weekly newsletter, monitoring local and national headlines, and filming and editing his own video about his internship.

"The communications department has been a good fit for me to improve my future goals," Bramlett said. "Working here was a valuable experience to help me improve my media skills, network, and employment experience and I can't wait to see where my career will lead me in the future."

It wasn't long after his internship ended that Bramlett was able to utilize the skills he gained at DIDD. Before he graduated from Lipscomb IDEAL, he was offered a new job at a marketing company in Nashville to produce videos with their team and continue working toward reaching his ultimate career goals.

Goal 4

Make Tennessee state government a model employer for people with disabilities

GOAL 4

Objective

Develop initiatives that increase internship and employment opportunities for people with disabilities within Tennessee state government

The Council on Developmental Disabilities spearheaded the push to increase internship opportunities for people with disabilities within state government. Partnering with state agencies and Nashville-area inclusive higher education programs, several students have completed internships at state agencies over the past two years.

In spring 2017, those internship opportunities included Gov. Haslam's constituent services office and two interns who worked with the Department of Economic and Community Development. The 2017-2018 academic year brought more opportunities, with two students interning at the Department of Education, and one intern at the Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. These internships have been highly successful, providing interns with hands-on experience working in a professional environment, while making major contributions to the host state agencies. It has also given colleagues an opportunity to see firsthand the value that people with disabilities can bring to the workplace.

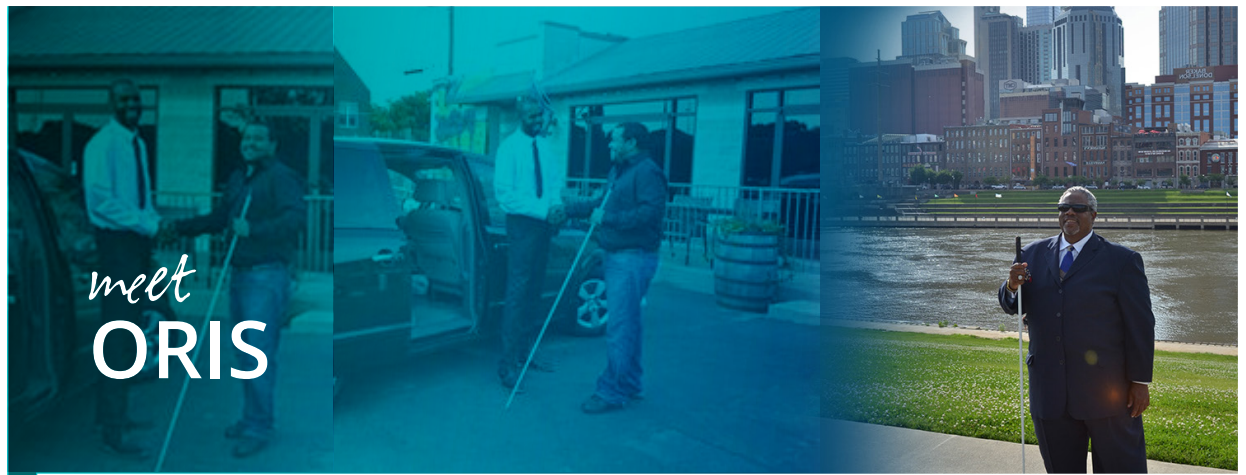
People with disabilities are also receiving opportunities through contracts with the state. The Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities worked with the Department of General Services and maintenance contractor Jones Lang LaSalle to ensure that the maintenance contract for the former Clover Bottom Developmental Center included competitive integrated employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Through that contract, two people with intellectual disabilities have been hired on the crew that provides janitorial services for the Stamps Building, which houses DIDD's Middle Tennessee Regional Office.

Opportunities are already being created through the inclusion of businesses owned by people with disabilities to the existing Governor's Office of Diversity Business Enterprise (Go-DBE). This program provides greater exposure to opportunities with the state of Tennessee and access to technical assistance for business owners with disabilities. The first disability-owned business, U Matter Transportation, has already connected with the program after receiving training and adaptive equipment support from Vocational Rehabilitation.

DISABILITY LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

As state agencies continue to work together on the Employment First Task Force and collaborate to strengthen coordination across agencies, it has been important to develop emerging leaders to sustain the collaboration on the front lines of service delivery. As a part of that goal, the Council on Developmental Disabilities and the Department of Human Resources created the Leadership Academy for Excellence in Disability Services in 2015. This Academy is conducted on an annual basis, and aims to create a shared set of values, goals, and an aligned customer-focused approach for state agencies that directly impact the lives of people with disabilities.

During the second year, group projects were added to the curriculum designed to address cross-agency issues and increase collaboration across Tennessee's disability system. Thirty-five state employees representing seven state agencies are participating in year two of the Academy. The second class will graduate in October 2018.



"I Have More Vision than Ever": Oris's Path

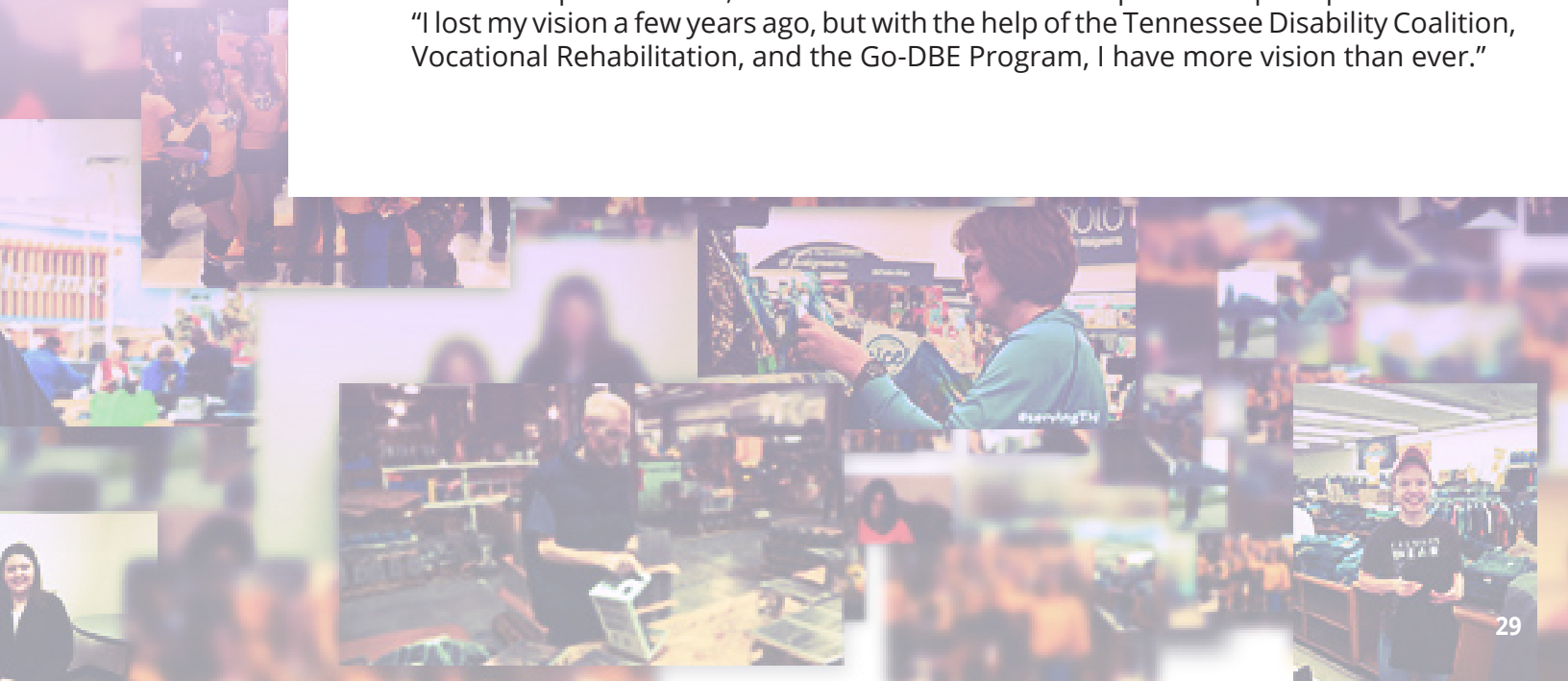
Today, Oris Bowen is the CEO of U Matter Transportation in Nashville, Tennessee. Mr. Bowen lost his sight in 2002. He then became withdrawn, depressed, and isolated from society. Mr. Bowen came to Vocational Rehabilitation for help adjusting to his vision loss and to gain employment. With the support of Vocational Rehabilitation, Mr. Bowen attended the Louisiana Center for the Blind to learn adaptive computer skills, braille, orientation and mobility skills, and independent living skills. After that, he began working on his business plan for U Matter Transportation.

Bowen officially opened U Matter Transportation in February of 2018. Vocational Rehabilitation helped by providing adaptive technology, marketing expenses, state and local business fees, office supplies, and start up insurance. With the training and adaptive equipment Mr. Bowen received, he is able to run his business independently.

His goal with U Matter Transportation is to provide affordable transportation to individuals, families, and children with disabilities. Bowen makes sure all of his drivers are educated on supporting people with disabilities in order to provide a more personal experience for his customers. As his business expands, he plans on hiring people with disabilities to help with the running of his business. In addition, Bowen's U Matter Transportation has become a certified business with the Governor's Office of Diversity of Business Enterprise (Go-DBE).

In a recent presentation, Bowen discussed how these partnerships impacted his life. "I lost my vision a few years ago, but with the help of the Tennessee Disability Coalition, Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Go-DBE Program, I have more vision than ever."

Path to Employment



Goal 5

Prepare students for employment
and post-secondary success

GOAL 5

Objective

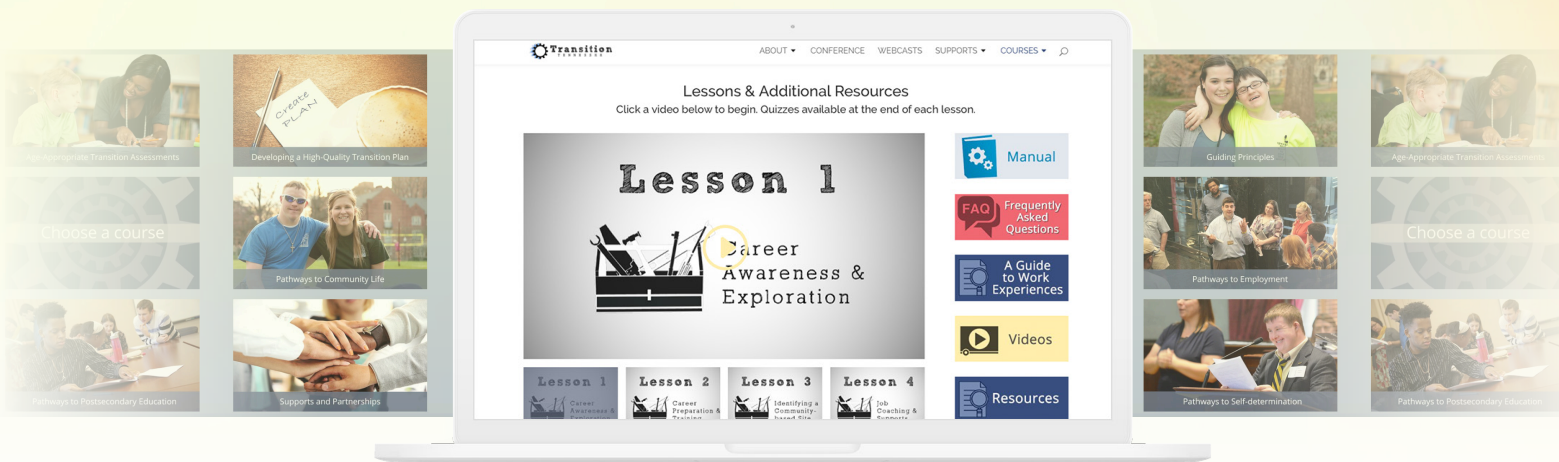
Expand use of Transition TN among educators and other stakeholders

In February 2017, the Department of Education and Vanderbilt University launched TransitionTennessee, which is a hub for training and resources on preparing students with disabilities for life after high school. Over the past year, this hub has continued to expand. Online content was completed for new sections including Pathways to Education, Pathways to Self-Determination, and Pathways to Community Life. Educators can use TransitionTennessee as a blueprint for building a comprehensive transition plan and improving outcomes for students with disabilities.

In addition to training and resources, educators can also sign up for Communities of Practice through TransitionTennessee and districts can apply for free technical assistance through the online portal.

Use of the online portal has more than doubled since last year, with 3,400 user accounts created on TransitionTennessee.

The framework for TransitionTennessee continues to grow with the first transition conference scheduled to be held in January 2019 in conjunction with the Partners in Education statewide special education conference hosted by the Department of Education. Furthermore, it is being used as a model in developing the online hub for the Pre-ETS training mentioned in Goal 1.



GOAL 5

Objective

Educate stakeholders on diploma options and assess impact

Use of the occupational diploma continues to grow as a way to prepare students for employment. Students who want to receive an occupational diploma must master the Skills, Knowledge and Experience Mastery Assessment, and complete two years of work experience.

The state of Tennessee is preparing to launch a new diploma alternative for students with disabilities. The Alternate Academic Diploma will be a pathway for incoming freshman students in the FY18-19 academic year. This was an option states could adopt and develop under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act. Students on this diploma path will follow a set of course requirements including:

- Participating in the high school alternate assessments
- Earning at minimum 22 prescribed credits
- Receiving special education services or supports and making satisfactory progress on an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)
- Having satisfactory attendance and conduct records
- Having completed a transition assessment that measures post-secondary education and training, employment, independent living, and community involvement

Those who meet the requirements and receive this diploma within four years including one summer will count in a school district's graduation rate.

INCLUSIVE HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

For students with intellectual and developmental disabilities who are seeking a post-secondary education, there are currently five inclusive higher education programs in Tennessee. These two, three and four-year programs provide students with education, social skills, self-advocacy skills, and job training to promote independence and achieve employment. Employment rates for graduating students continue to be very high.

The Tennessee Inclusive Higher Education Alliance has been working with the Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation (TSAC) to explore additional sources of funding for students in Tennessee's inclusive higher education programs. Beginning this year, students in three of the five programs will be eligible for Tennessee Promise or Reconnect funds if they meet all of the requirements. TSAC is also working to make this a possibility for the two other programs. The ability to use these funds would assist with removing the financial barrier for potential students who want to explore post-secondary education.

Tennessee's inclusive higher education programs and the University of Memphis TIGER LIFE program played host to youth, families and professionals across the Southeast during the Southeastern Postsecondary Alliance Conference this past spring.

Expansion of these programs in Tennessee is in the works with East Tennessee State University making plans to pilot a program. Other Tennessee colleges and community colleges are also exploring development of their own programs.



meet
CARLTON

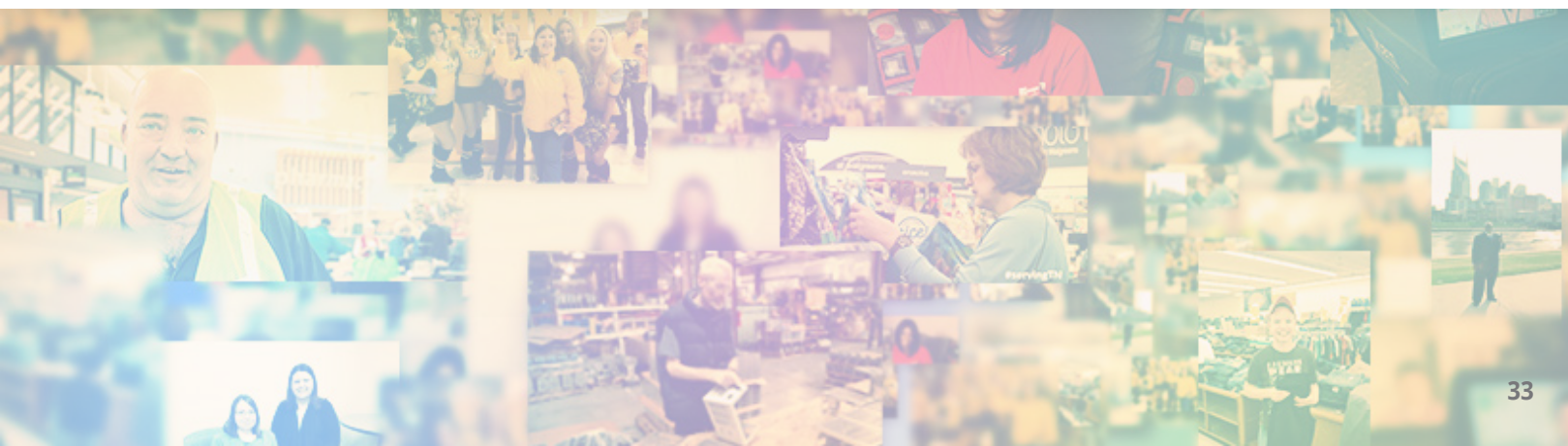
Transitioning from School to Employment: Carlton's Path

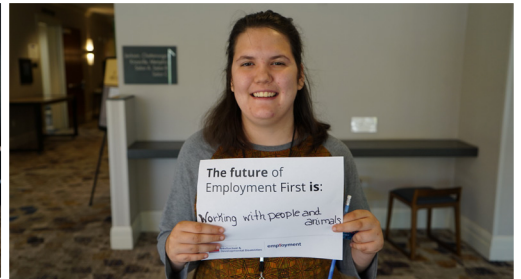
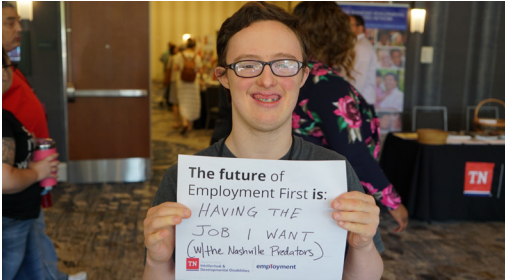
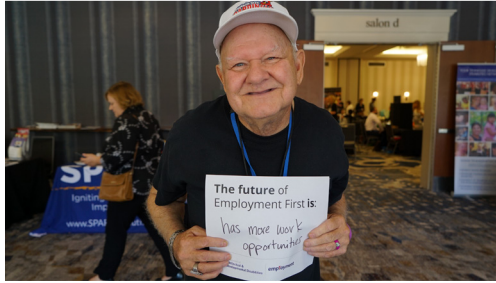
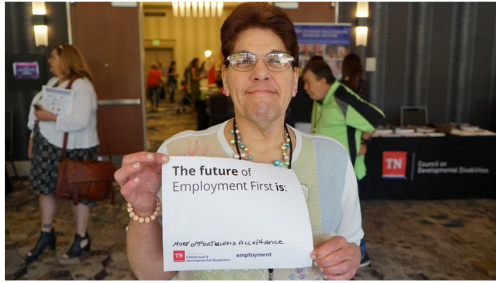
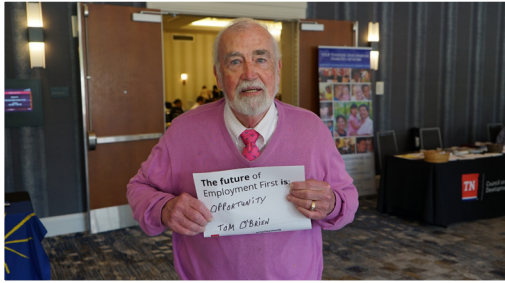
The Transition School to Work (TSW) program in Anderson County Schools strives to give every student the opportunity to develop their strengths and find their passion. The TSW program began working with Hammer's Department Store in Clinton in the fall of 2016. TSW brought in small groups of students from Clinton High School weekly. The students began shadowing employees, merchandising, stocking and providing customer service in the high-volume environment that Hammer's Department Store is.

One such student was Carlton Crumpley, a freshman at the time. Crumpley demonstrated excellent customer service skills and the ability to follow directions. He bonded immediately with the employees and supervisors at Hammer's. Crumpley expressed his desire to work at Hammer's long term. The Hammer Family, specifically Kelly Calhoun the Clinton store manager, felt that he had shown he could become a valuable member of the team. Calhoun said they would like to hire Crumpley for the summer. Crumpley worked two days a week at Hammers' throughout the summer of 2017. When the 2017-2018 school year started, Crumpley thought that he would no longer be able to work, because he was back in school. Hammer's, TSW, and Clinton High School staff brainstormed on how to work together to ensure Crumpley could maintain his employment. He continued to work at Hammer's two mornings a week throughout the 2017-2018 school year and is now starting his 2nd year of paid employment at Hammer's. He is very proud of his accomplishments and works to help his fellow students find their passion as well.

Hammer's Department Store felt that the program was not only an asset to students such as Crumpley, but an asset to the community as well. Now, they are welcoming students from both Clinton High School and Anderson County High School into their store and discussing employing future students from the program.

Path to Employment





The Future of **Employment First**

The Employment First movement has made monumental strides over the course of Governor Haslam's administration, and the Employment First Task Force is looking forward to continuing the momentum into a new administration. Governor Haslam often remarks that for his administration, "all means all" when it comes to education and employment opportunities for Tennesseans. These words embody the actions taken during his eight years in office.

The next administration will inherit a solid foundation for continued work on Employment First. But while there has been tremendous progress, there are significant challenges that still exist. Those include the continued workforce crisis among direct support professionals who support people with disabilities. Also, while policies and practices have been amended statewide, implementation on the local level remains a challenge. The availability of resources to expand successful employment programs to all who want to work also continues to be a major focus area for the task force, advocacy groups and other stakeholders.

There still remains a significant gap between the statewide employment rate among all Tennesseans and the employment rate for people with disabilities. Despite the positive gains we have seen overall for the general workforce, people with disabilities have not seen a proportional increase. This highlights the need not only for increased outreach to employers about the contributions people with disabilities can make to the workforce, but also with people and their families to address misconceptions that still exist about competitive integrated employment.

The photo essay accompanying this report also demonstrates some of the barriers to employment that people with disabilities and their supporters still face in Tennessee. It is another reminder that the work on Employment First needs to continue to remain a priority in the next administration, and the task force is ready to accept the challenges that remain and continue the work to ensure "all means all" in both philosophy and practice across Tennessee.



APPENDICES

A ~ EMPLOYMENT FIRST STRATEGIC PLAN

B ~ EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 28

C ~ EMPLOYMENT FIRST TASK FORCE MEMBERS

D ~ TASK FORCE WORKGROUP PARTICIPANTS

EMPLOYMENT FIRST STRATEGIC PLAN

MISSION

Create and expand opportunities for employment for all Tennesseans with disabilities

VISION

People with disabilities have the same opportunities for employment as anyone

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 28

An order establishing the Tennessee Employment First initiative to expand community employment opportunities for Tennesseans with disabilities

GOALS

1. Align service delivery systems and strengthen coordination to increase employment opportunities for Tennesseans with disabilities (#Data #Coordination #WIOA #Policy #Legislation #Workforce)
2. Build shared community commitment to Employment First (#Self-Advocates #Families #Community #Communication)
3. Increase the number of employers that hire people with disabilities (#Businesses)
4. Make Tennessee state government a model employer of people with disabilities (#Government #Leadership)
5. Prepare students for employment and post-secondary success (#Education #Transition)

GOAL 1

Align service delivery systems and strengthen coordination to increase employment opportunities for Tennesseans with disabilities (#Data #Coordination #WIOA #Policy #Legislation #Workforce)

OBJECTIVE

Collect, analyze, and integrate employment data of people with disabilities

STRATEGIES

- Maintain employment data dashboard on TennesseeWorks website with regularly updated data from public and private sources, which may include but is not limited to: DIDD, DHS/VR, DOL, TennCare, DOE, Vanderbilt Kennedy Center, DMHSAS, TEAM (Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model) TN, Health, Children's Services, Treasury, Project SEARCH, etc.
- Explore the possibility of integrating additional data sources into the Tennessee Longitudinal Data System (TLDS)
- Continue exploring ways to maximize use of TLDS data
- Set statewide metrics, goals, and benchmarks for longitudinal employment rates. Evaluate progress regularly.
- Utilize data (e.g. from DOE student data) to make decisions and plan for services in other agencies
- Analyze available data (e.g. Easy IEP, Indicator 13, and Indicator 14) to answer important key questions related to the quality of transition assessment, planning, and services.

RESPONSIBLE PARTIES

- Data workgroup
- Vanderbilt Kennedy Center
- Respective state agencies

GOAL 1

Align service delivery systems and strengthen coordination to increase employment opportunities for Tennesseans with disabilities (#Data #Coordination #WIOA #Policy #Legislation #Workforce)

OBJECTIVE

Assess impact of interagency MOUs that promote employment for people with disabilities

STRATEGIES

- Assess impact of MOUs regularly (e.g. through quarterly presentations/updates from involved agencies) including tracked indicators/outcomes and qualitative observations. MOUs to be assessed include, but are not limited to:
 - Youth Transition
 - VR/TennCare (ECF CHOICES)
 - VR/DMHSAS (IPS)
 - VR/DIDD (Supported Employment)
 - VR/DOLWD (employment data sharing)
 - VR/TDOC (Day Reporting Community Resource Centers)
 - VR/DOE (pre-employment transition services)
- Add Department of Health and TennCare as signatories to the Youth Transition MOU
- Clearly delineate state and local agency roles and responsibilities in planning, services, and coordination, and clearly communicate to help individuals and families better understand state and local systems
- Explore the development of a universal form/plan built around the individual
- Utilize customer survey data to assess the efficacy and alignment of local service delivery systems

RESPONSIBLE PARTIES

- Employment Roundtable
- Respective state agencies

OBJECTIVE

Track implementation and impact of WIOA Combined State Plan sections focused on people with disabilities

STRATEGIES

- Revisit WIOA combined state plan (e.g. presentation by DOL at the Employment Roundtable) to ensure agencies are aware of progress, challenges, and agency roles/responsibilities
- Strengthen partnership and collaboration between DOL and entities that have a disability focus

RESPONSIBLE PARTIES

- VR
- DOL
- Employment Roundtable

OBJECTIVE

Propose policies, regulations, legislation, and funding that increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities

STRATEGIES

- Continue educating and advocating for the passage and expansion of Supported Decision Making Legislation
- Educate stakeholders (e.g. self-advocates, families, educators, medical practitioners, judges, etc.) about supported decision making options for people with disabilities
- Propose legislation and/or seek state/federal funding to support a career ladder strategy for staff who work for provider agencies
- Pursue additional funding for Individual Placement and Support (IPS)
- Explore additional strategies to increase the penetration rate of IPS statewide
- Pilot strategies to effectively support individuals with dual diagnosis (IDD + behavioral health diagnosis) in the workplace
- Explore and implement strategies to reduce the use of sub-minimum wages, under 14(c) certificates, for people with disabilities

RESPONSIBLE PARTIES

- Policy workgroup
- Advocacy organizations
- State agencies (as appropriate per funding/lobbying requirements)

OBJECTIVE

Assess the impact of the Employment and Community First CHOICES program

STRATEGIES

- Continue reporting on ECF CHOICES outcomes, including additional data fields (e.g. wages, industries, demographics of employed individuals, etc.)
- Continue implementing communication strategies to ensure ECF CHOICES information is available and consistent for all stakeholder groups.

RESPONSIBLE PARTIES

- TennCare
- Individuals/Family Workgroup
- Communications Workgroup
- Advocacy organizations

GOAL 1 ... CONTINUED

Align service delivery systems and strengthen coordination to increase employment opportunities for Tennesseans with disabilities (#Data #Coordination #WIOA #Policy #Legislation #Workforce)

OBJECTIVE

Explore workforce strategies to promote recruitment, retention, and development of disability service professionals

STRATEGIES

- Review promising practices nationally
- Share information about new initiatives in Tennessee to provide training at community colleges

RESPONSIBLE PARTIES

- TennCare, VR, DIDD, and other state agencies as appropriate
- Provider workgroup

GOAL 2

Build shared community commitment to Employment First (#Self-Advocates #Families #Community #Communication)

OBJECTIVE

Cultivate Employment First champions across Tennessee, including individuals and families, community leaders, public officials, schools, private citizens, and other organizations

STRATEGIES

- Continue hosting self-sustaining Think Employment! Summit(s) and consider holding regional summits vs. one statewide summit
- Host Community Conversations across Tennessee and share results
- Complete and share findings from employer expectation survey
- Develop and implement a statewide awareness campaign about the benefits of employing people with disabilities
- Implement strategies to recognize businesses that employ people with disabilities
- Continue expanding Way2Work and other video series showcasing people who are in competitive, integrated employment and/or volunteer opportunities. Target videos strategically to different areas of need and stakeholder groups (e.g. self-advocates, business leaders, selfemployment, etc.)
- Maintain updated content for the resource web page on the TennesseeWorks website
- Convene the Employment First Communications Workgroup quarterly to coordinate strategies for materials and information to support individuals and families in securing employment.
- Continue #HireMyStrengths campaign and consider expanding to a yearround campaign wrapped around other events (e.g. Disability Day on the Hill, PIE Conference, etc.)
- Consider using "education ministries" model through faith communities
- Ensure parents/caregivers have access to information regarding respite and other related services
- Continue outreach and education about importance of benefits counseling and available resources

RESPONSIBLE PARTIES

- Individuals/Families Workgroup
- Employer Workgroup
- Provider Workgroup
- Communications workgroup
- DOE
- DIDD
- VR
- Vanderbilt Kennedy Center

OBJECTIVE

Improve and expand communication channels to individuals with disabilities and their families

STRATEGIES

- Continuously seek input from families and stay current in our understanding about what they want and need
- Engage community and grassroots organizations regularly to learn from them and support their work
- Effectively distribute materials/information to support individuals and families in securing employment
- Ensure resources appear in format(s) that are accessible to individuals and families
- Coordinate linkage and messaging across state agency websites
- Survey key stakeholders to measure the effectiveness of communication
- Continue biweekly blog on TennesseeWorks about issues important to families around employment, independent living, policy, etc.
- Raise awareness among individuals and families about ABLE TN and ECF CHOICES
- Use existing forums (e.g. Arc Family Forums, Family Coalition meetings, etc.) to discuss employment topics with families
- Use existing forums (e.g. DIDD regional focus groups, TennCare advisory groups, etc.) to discuss employment topics with individuals with disabilities
- Implement communication strategies to ensure stakeholders are aware of AJC services
- Create resources for families to advocate for work-related experiences in the educational programs of their children

RESPONSIBLE PARTIES

- Communications workgroup
- Individuals/Families Workgroup
- Provider Workgroup
- DOE
- Vanderbilt Kennedy Center
- DOL/AJCs
- VR

GOAL 3

Increase the number of employers that hire people with disabilities (#Businesses)

OBJECTIVE

Cultivate Employment First champions among business leaders across Tennessee

STRATEGIES

- Recognize businesses and individual business leaders who hire people with disabilities (e.g. Governor's Award)
- Seek opportunities to present the "business case" for employing people with disabilities (available on the TennesseeWorks website)
- Share the Employer Outreach Initiative (EOI) materials in the TennesseeWorks website employer section
- Explore training programs that help businesses assess needs, tasks, and opportunities within their company
- Use available data from ECF CHOICES, VR, DMHSAS, DIDD, etc. to identify businesses that hire people with disabilities and approach them about becoming part of the broader Employment First movement. Tap into the experiences and expertise of these businesses to continue refining our business engagement practices.

RESPONSIBLE PARTIES

- Employer Workgroup
- Provider workgroup
- Policy Workgroup
- VR, DOL, and other state agencies as appropriate

GOAL 3 ... CONTINUED

Increase the number of employers that hire people with disabilities (#Businesses)

OBJECTIVE

Establish baseline and set goals for the number of Tennessee businesses that employ people with disabilities

STRATEGIES

- Develop a system to collect and analyze data about businesses that employ people with disabilities in Tennessee
- Establish relationships with Workforce 360 (ECD) and American Job Centers (AJCs) at the local level
- Increase awareness and use of AJC system

RESPONSIBLE PARTIES

- Data workgroup
- Employer workgroup
- DOL/AJCs

OBJECTIVE

Create and expand partnerships with existing workforce initiatives

STRATEGIES

- Consider implementing strategies to establish local/regional “single points of contact” for employers

RESPONSIBLE PARTIES

- Employer workgroup
- DOL, VR, and other state agencies as appropriate

OBJECTIVE

Create additional partnerships between employers and school transition programs

STRATEGIES

- Establish additional employer partnerships, (e.g. Project SEARCH, Walgreen’s REDI, Sam’s Club/Waves training program, etc.)
- Use DOE modules content to meet professional development needs of transition stakeholders

RESPONSIBLE PARTIES

- DOE
- Employer workgroup
- Provider workgroup
- VR

GOAL 4

Make Tennessee state government a model employer of people with disabilities (#Government #Leadership)

OBJECTIVE

Develop initiatives that increase internship and employment opportunities for people with disabilities within Tennessee state government

STRATEGIES

- Engage the TN Department of Human Resources as a partner in making TN a model public sector employer
- Work with the Commissioner of TN Department of HR on the possibility of expanding internships and employment opportunities within state government
- Continue conversations with TN state parks systems about hiring people with disabilities
- Tennessee Leadership Academy for Excellence in Disability Services (LAEDS)
- Explore how lessons/practices learned at the state government level may be applicable to local/county governments.

RESPONSIBLE PARTIES

- Policy Workgroup
- DD Council

OBJECTIVE

Create toolkit that serves as a resource for TN communities to work towards becoming a model public sector employer of people with disabilities

STRATEGIES

- Identify and support communities (city/county governments) that want to become model employer communities
- Define characteristics of successful model public sector employers
- Explore the possibility of using/adapting the public toolkit for private businesses
- Exchange best practices with employer engagement group (i.e. which best practices are relevant for public and private engagement)

RESPONSIBLE PARTIES

- Policy Workgroup
- DD Council

GOAL 5

Prepare students for employment and post-secondary success (#Education #Transition)

OBJECTIVE

Expand use of Transition TN among educators and other stakeholders

STRATEGIES

- Highlight various TransitionTN resources and lessons through Transition Tennessee listserv
- Encourage school districts in need of assistance to access TransitionTN as the first step in taking a proactive approach to improving student outcomes
- Develop regional communities of practice (CoP) and leverage the resources in TransitionTN as a means to support the CoPs
- Ensure students have access to information that lists and explains all options/programs available upon exiting the school system.

RESPONSIBLE PARTIES

- DOE
- VR
- Communications workgroup

OBJECTIVE

Educate stakeholders on diploma options and assess impact

STRATEGIES

- Start a study of the new diploma options (e.g. occupational and alternate academic diploma), their implementation, and their impact on student outcomes

RESPONSIBLE PARTIES

- DOE
- Communications workgroup

OBJECTIVE

Provide technical assistance and coaching for transition professional development modules

STRATEGIES

- Implement and evaluate a plan for professional development that includes both live training and online resources through Transition Tennessee.
- Develop a “talking points” series that focuses on superintendents, school administrators, and other professionals the importance of investing in transition and employment
- Showcase schools and programs in the state that are effectively connecting students to early work experiences.
- Establish baselines and measure outcomes for transitional professional development modules
- Develop a set of district and school level reflection tools addressing best and recommended practices in transition and employment

RESPONSIBLE PARTIES

- DOE
- Communications workgroup

OBJECTIVE

Increase work-based learning opportunities for transitioning students

STRATEGIES

- Increase paid work opportunities for students while they are still in school
- Continue to recruit WBL Coordinators to serve on the WBL Leadership Council and train additional WBL coordinators across the state
- Develop regional communities of practice (CoP) with a goal of determining how to increase WBL in local school districts
- State agencies representatives to participate on Business Advisory Committees for Project SEARCH, Next Steps, IDEAL, etc.

RESPONSIBLE PARTIES

- DOE
- DOL
- VR

STATE OF TENNESSEE
EXECUTIVE ORDER
BY THE GOVERNOR
No. 28

AN ORDER ESTABLISHING THE TENNESSEE EMPLOYMENT FIRST INITIATIVE TO EXPAND
COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR TENNESSEANS WITH DISABILITIES

WHEREAS, Tennesseans with disabilities, including those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, mental illnesses and substance abuse disorders and other disabilities, disproportionately experience high levels of unemployment, underemployment, and dependence upon publicly funded programs; and

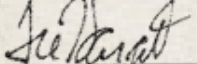
WHEREAS, my Administration is committed to supporting the Employment First Initiative establishing competitive and integrated employment, where work is performed in a typical work setting for a competitive wage.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Bill Haslam, Governor of the State of Tennessee, by virtue of the power and authority vested in me by the Tennessee Constitution and the laws of Tennessee, do hereby order and direct the following:

1. State agencies coordinate efforts to increase opportunities for integrated and competitive employment for Tennesseans with intellectual and developmental disabilities, mental illnesses, substance abuse disorders and other disabilities.
2. The Tennessee Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities convene an Employment First Taskforce ("Taskforce").
3. The Taskforce shall consist of representatives from the agencies administering disability services, family members of persons receiving employment services, vocational rehabilitation, workforce services and education, as well as consumer advocates and third party disability service providers.
4. This Taskforce shall:
 - a. Identify state agency policies and procedures that create barriers and disincentives for employment of people with disabilities and develop recommendations to reduce or eliminate those barriers and disincentives to better meet the needs of individuals who desire employment;
 - b. Identify best practices, effective partnerships, sources of available federal funds and opportunities for shared services among existing state agencies to increase integrated and competitive employment opportunities for Tennesseans with disabilities;
 - c. Review and consider the recommendations of the Office of Disability and Employment Policy (ODEP) to increase opportunities for integrated and competitive employment for Tennesseans with disabilities.
 - d. Develop training on disability employment for state agencies, provider agencies, individuals being supported and their families in order to raise awareness of effective strategies for achieving integrated and competitive employment outcomes.
5. The Taskforce shall convene for its initial meeting on or before August 1, 2013. Thereafter, the Taskforce shall meet quarterly and provide an annual progress report to the Governor.

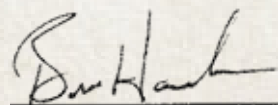
IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have subscribed my signature and caused the Great Seal of the State of Tennessee to be affixed this **19th** day of **June, 2013**.

ATTEST:



SECRETARY OF STATE





GOVERNOR

EMPLOYMENT FIRST **TASK FORCE MEMBERS**

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- Doria Panvini
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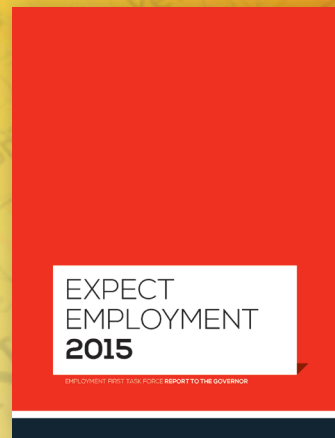
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- Tom Starling
- Cassie Belter
- Christopher Morant



*"Employment First, means that employment in the general workforce should be the first and preferred option for individuals with disabilities receiving assistance from publicly funded systems. Simply put, Employment First means real jobs, real wages." ~ **APSE***



2014



2015



2016



2017

View our **EXPECT EMPLOYMENT REPORTS** from previous years by visiting our site:

tn.gov/didd/e1st



Tennessee Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (DIDD) Authorization No. 344087, 200 copies printed. This public document was promulgated at a cost of \$4.29 per copy. September 2018.



EXPECT EMPLOYMENT

EMPLOYMENT FIRST TASK FORCE
REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR