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Disability and Aging

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2023

### Expect Employment [2023]

Tennessee. Employment First Task Force

Tennessee. Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

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**EXPECT  
EMPLOYMENT**



EXPECT EMPLOYMENT // 10 YEAR CELEBRATION



EXPECT EMPLOYMENT // 10 YEAR CELEBRATION





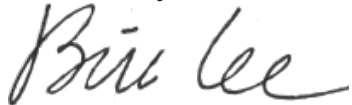
# A NOTE FROM GOVERNOR BILL LEE

Tennessee is leading the nation with record economic development and job creation thanks to our unmatched business climate and a skilled workforce strategy. Since 2019, companies have invested more than \$30 billion in our state, creating 170,000 jobs for Tennesseans, and we continue to make strategic investments that will recruit additional businesses to our state and prepare Tennessee's workforce for the future.

As we prioritize workforce development, I thank the Employment Task Force for its efforts to help Tennesseans with disabilities gain meaningful employment over the past 10 years. During my time as governor, I've experienced the various ways state agencies are collaborating with community partners to prepare these remarkable individuals to join the workforce. I've also seen the pride a person feels when they receive a first paycheck and meet with families who previously thought work wouldn't be in their loved one's future.

I'm proud that here in Tennessee, the Employment First Task Force met its goal of closing the employment gap by five percent between 2018 and 2022. As the Task Force continues its work to further close that gap by another five percent by 2028, I look forward to a continued partnership to ensure that Tennesseans with disabilities can thrive in our state's workforce.

Sincerely,



Bill Lee  
Governor of Tennessee



# EMPLOYMENT FIRST PARTNER AGENCIES



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## PURPOSE. PROGRESS. PARTNERSHIP.

### 10 YEARS OF EMPLOYMENT FIRST

In June 2013, Governor Bill Haslam signed Executive Order No. 28. This named Tennessee as an Employment First state and directed the Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (DIDD) to convene an Employment First Task Force. The task force was to be made up of state agencies that led programs aimed at supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, physical and other disabilities, and mental health diagnoses and substance use disorders to find employment. Furthermore, it asked public and private partners on the task force to increase coordination of services and identify barriers to employment.

The Employment First movement in Tennessee actually started more than a decade earlier, when the then Division of Mental Retardation Services (now known as DIDD) started an initiative in 2002 to make employment the first option for people who received supports through its waiver programs. While the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities and the Arc Tennessee supported this work, much of it was confined to only those receiving services through DMRS. However, it's important to note that this early initiative brought increased employment outcomes and showed how key policy and funding changes at a state level could have a positive and lasting impact.

Executive Order No. 28 expanded the scope and brought increased collaboration. The task force began meeting quarterly soon after the order was signed and has continued for the past ten years. The first steps were to bring people with disabilities and families, community agencies, advocates, employers, and others together to identify the existing barriers and set key goals to guide the first four-year strategic plan.

Ten years later, the task force is on its third strategic plan and has finished many of the initial goals it set out to accomplish. State agencies have evolved many of the service and supports offered to better align with an Employment First mission. Thousands of people who once were on long waiting lists for services are now supported to reach their own work outcomes. Sheltered work has diminished, subminimum wages have been eliminated. These achievements have not been without major setbacks: the most significant being the pandemic and the negative impact it had on employment for people with disabilities. However, even with that challenge, the state was able to achieve its primary goal: to close the employment gap by 5 percent by 2023.

What did it take to get there?

**PURPOSE:** There was a clear mission to expand competitive, integrated employment and everyone on the task force bought into that mission.

**PROGRESS:** Every small step forward was celebrated. Those incremental changes might not have seemed significant at the time, but they were the building blocks that led to monumental accomplishments.

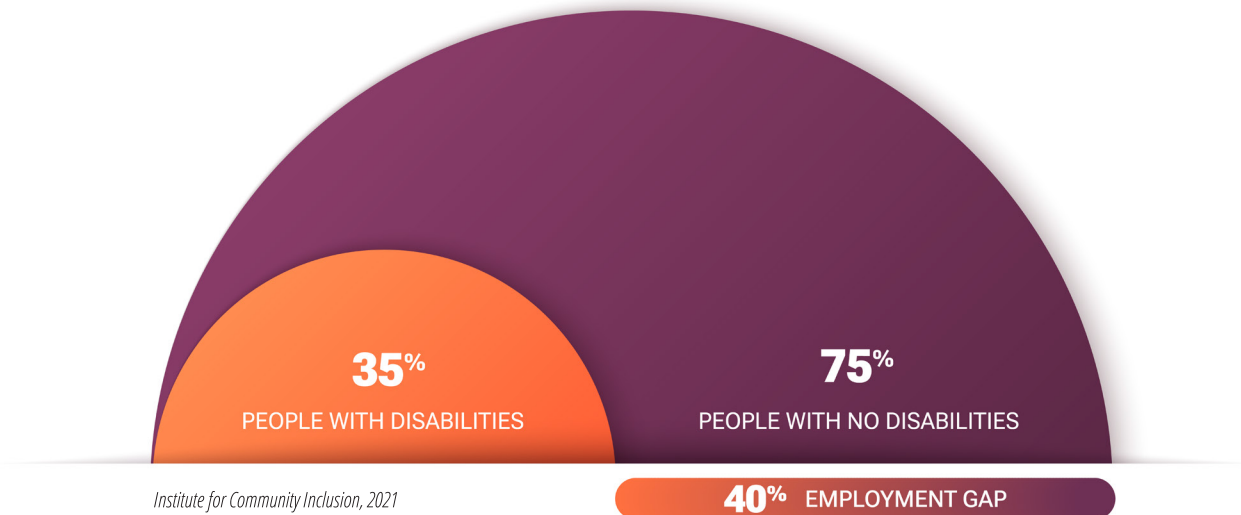
**PARTNERSHIP:** This work did not happen in a silo. It took collaboration and a willingness to tackle big problems. It involved working to change policies, programs, funding, and mindsets. Hundreds of people spent countless hours making this state a better place for people with disabilities to find and keep a job.

This year's report not only discusses progress on the state's current strategic plan, but it also celebrates how **Purpose, Progress and Partnership** have changed the Employment First movement and the state of Tennessee for the better over the past ten years. The Employment First Task Force would like to thank all of its members and others who have participated in these efforts, as well as governors Haslam and Lee, and the Tennessee General Assembly who helped enact the changes needed to make Tennessee a national leader in Employment First.



# CLOSING THE TENNESSEE EMPLOYMENT GAP BETWEEN PEOPLE WITH AND WITHOUT DISABILITIES **BY 5% BY 2028**

## CURRENT EMPLOYMENT GAP



## WHAT HAVE WE DONE?

In 2012, the newly formed TennesseeWorks Partnership brought together people with disabilities, families, community agencies, state government, employers, and community leaders to build programs and develop policies promoting employment for people with disabilities. By Executive Order, the Governor's Employment First Task Force was established in 2013. Working together, members of TennesseeWorks and the Employment First Task Force have moved Tennessee forward in the following areas:

1. Formed statewide partnerships between ***more than 40 organizations***.
2. Developed five task force subgroups focused on ***service alignment, technology and innovation, employers, community awareness, and student transition***.
3. ***Met our initial goal to close the employment gap by 5% between 2018 and 2022.***

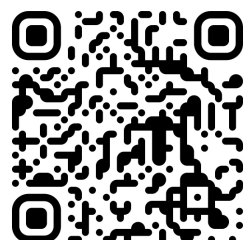
## WHAT ARE WE DOING TO CLOSE THE EMPLOYMENT GAP BY ANOTHER 5%?

To close the employment gap by an additional 5%, members of TennesseeWorks and the Employment First Task Force continue to work collaboratively to ensure services and supports are based on the needs of the disability community and that supports and services are comprehensive and consider the whole person.

## HOW CAN YOU HELP US?

Scan the QR code to visit our website and learn more:  
[tn.gov/didd/for-consumers/employment--first](https://tn.gov/didd/for-consumers/employment--first)

scan me



**PURPOSE**



# PURPOSE

- ▶ Expand employment opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, physical and other disabilities, and mental health diagnoses and substance use disorders.
- ▶ Streamline services and supports offered by various state agencies to provide a clear pathway to employment.

## WHERE WE WERE

When the Employment First Task Force began meeting in 2013, there were only a handful of pathways for people with disabilities seeking employment and, in the case of community services for adults, a long waiting list to access supports for long term job coaching. Employment in segregated sheltered workshops earning subminimum wage was still standard practice across Tennessee. People with mental illness or substance abuse disorders were often left out of employment conversations entirely. People identified inadequate service options as well as a lack of flexibility with the options that existed. In school, people wanted increased transition preparation and had a need for more vocational opportunities and competency-based diploma options.

## TEN YEARS LATER, HOW DID WE DO?

Thousands more Tennesseans are accessing long term services and supports that provide flexible job supports that help a person along his or her employment journey. There are new programs that help people maintain and sustain employment. Transition is a key focus of the Employment First Task Force, and many different options exist across the state to help students become job-ready while they are still in school. Whether a person is preparing for employment, looking to find a job, trying to maintain a job, wanting to work more independently, or looking to grow along a career path, Tennessee has a variety of service and support options available. The following programs are just a few that have either started or expanded in Tennessee over the past 10 years to support a person's employment path.



## KAYLEE ARROWOOD

*model*

Kaylee's dream of becoming a model is coming true with support from the Employment and Community First (ECF) CHOICES program! Despite the obstacles, the bright and bubbly 25-year-old TennCare member is determined and excited to pursue a career in the modeling industry and we're privileged to highlight her success.

WATCH  
KAYLEE'S STORY



# HOUSTON VANDERGRIF

## international photographer

Houston's dream of taking pictures around the world is coming true with support from the Employment and Community First (ECF) CHOICES program! Despite the challenges, the talented 25-year-old TennCare member is thrilled to be pursuing his career as an international photographer and we're honored to highlight his success.

### HOUSTON'S WEBSITE:

Downs & Towns / [downsandtowns.com](http://downsandtowns.com)

WATCH  
HOUSTON'S  
STORY



## EMPLOYMENT AND COMMUNITY FIRST CHOICES (ECF CHOICES)

### *How Did ECF CHOICES Move Employment First Forward?*

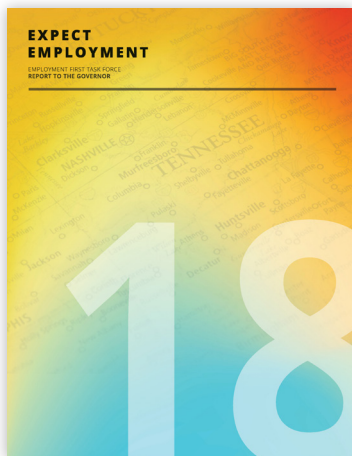
*Provided services and supports with an employment focus to thousands of Tennesseans with intellectual and developmental disabilities.*



The Employment and Community First CHOICES Program was launched in July 2016 as the first long-term services and supports program specifically geared towards competitive, integrated employment as the first and preferred option for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The program offers a variety of services designed to help people find a job, keep a job, and work more independently. A person's journey in ECF CHOICES includes pre-employment services that help them explore what a job in the community looks like and discover how their skills and strengths could contribute to a workplace.

When the program first launched in 2016, there were more than 7,000 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities on a waiting list for services and there were no options for people with only a developmental disability. This program has not only provided supports to thousands of Tennesseans, but also prioritized enrollment to those transitioning out of high school or adults who need supports to maintain employment.

Currently, the program serves over 5,800 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Nearly 25 percent of the working aged population enrolled in the program are currently employed, and average hourly wages have grown over \$2 an hour since 2017.





# JOHN SOLLARS

## *success story*



### MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS OF WORK: JOHN'S IPS SUCCESS STORY

Steady employment at a competitive wage can unlock a lot of doors for someone living with a disability. John Sollars's employment journey with Individual Placement and Support (IPS) Supported Employment gave him a new sense of purpose and new motivation on his journey of mental wellness.

"I just look forward to coming to work every day," says Sollars. "I mean if you'd seen me a year ago, you would have seen two different people."

John Sollars works as a dishwasher and a utility person at the Golden Corral Buffet and Grill in Morristown, Tennessee, but he lives in the next county over in Sneedville. That's a distance of more than 30 miles. It's a commute that's all the more impressive when you learn Sollars was so determined to return to work that he walked to work for a time.

"I've got depression and anxiety. It just bothered me so bad that I just decided I'm going to walk to work," says Sollars.

"He was that dedicated. He wouldn't call and say, 'I don't have a way today,' or 'Can you come get me today?' He would always just walk and come," said Steven Lamb, IPS Employment Specialist with Frontier Health.

Word of John's dedication to the job and the great lengths he was going through to get to work soon got around. And that's when his new work family stepped up to help.

"The boss found out that John was walking and getting rides wherever he could, and he loaned John money to get a car," says Randell Williams, who's John's supervisor. "It's really a gem to find somebody that actually stays and does the job they're hired to do," Williams adds.

"I love it here. I mean I love the people. I love the servers. I love the managers. I mean they're just like a big old family," says Sollars.

And with a smile on his face, Sollars adds, "I've got one or two here that calls me Papaw."



# INDIVIDUAL PLACEMENT AND SUPPORT (IPS)

## ***How Did IPS Move Employment First Forward?***

*What started as a pilot program has grown to support thousands with mental health diagnoses reach their employment goals.*

Individual Placement and Support (IPS) is an evidence-based practice model intended for people with mental health diagnoses (e.g. behavioral health conditions, mental illness, substance abuse) to obtain competitive, integrated employment. Over the past ten years, IPS has grown significantly and provided more opportunities for people across the state. When IPS services began in Tennessee, it was delivered through a pilot program with just four providers. Today, IPS is provided in 49 counties across Tennessee, 32 of which are in rural areas of the state, and 17 in urban areas. There are 16 IPS supported employment providers, 14 of which partner with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) to deliver IPS services. In 2022, an expansion was approved by the Tennessee General Assembly and their partnership along with VR. This has allowed over 2,000 people with mental health and/or substance use conditions to be supported with an employment goal. Through this program, people have obtained a variety of jobs from nursing, lifeguards, to warehouse workers. As of April 2023, a total of 8,338 people have been supported with finding a job, and 3,710 people started working.

## **EXPECT EMPLOYMENT**



## **PROJECT SEARCH**

### ***How Did Project SEARCH Move Employment First Forward?***

*Gave transition-age students and adult with disabilities training and exposure to a variety of different job roles at an established employer in their community with a high rate of job placement after completion.*

In 2013, the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities convened a group of state agencies to plan out the first Project SEARCH sites across Tennessee. This national model's primary objective is to secure competitive, integrated employment for people with disabilities by pairing local school districts and/or adult VR customers with large community businesses

for a rotation of internships, in partnership with a community rehabilitation provider. Project SEARCH gives people the opportunity to gain hands-on experience through total immersion in the workplace, which facilitates the teaching and learning process, as well as the acquisition of employability and marketable work skills.

Now funded and facilitated by the Tennessee Department of Human Services Vocational Rehabilitation program, Project SEARCH has seen tremendous growth and expansion over the past 10 years with 17 active sites in hospitals, hotels, higher education, and large corporate offices. The impact of Project SEARCH is evident in the lives of more than 700 VR customers who completed the program with an 85 percent employment rate. Ongoing efforts and outreach continue to promote the growth, reach, and impact of Project SEARCH for new school systems, counties, businesses, and VR customers.





## CHANGING THE SCHOOL TRANSITION LANDSCAPE

### ***How Did Changes in School Transition Activities Move Employment First Forward?***

*By providing diploma options with a focus on job readiness, expanding work-based learning opportunities, and developing pre-employment transition services, more youth can gain valuable employment skills while still in high school.*

One of the first recommendations made by the Employment First Task Force in 2014 was to ensure every student with a disability leaves high school with a choice of postsecondary education, job training or paid, integrated employment. Since that time, the task force has focused on the transition-aged population. Key changes have been made by the Department of Education and VR to provide job skills while students are still in school.

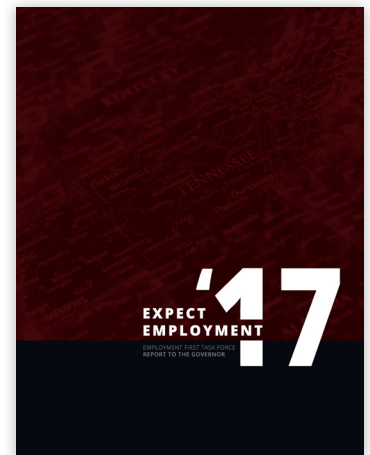
#### *Occupational Diploma and Alternative Academic Diploma*

The work started with important changes to high school policy to provide new diploma pathways for students with disabilities. The first change was to establish the occupational diploma. This diploma provides a roadmap for students to prepare for employment and includes completing two years of work-based learning as a requirement to earn it.

In early 2018, the state provided a new option through the alternate academic diploma, which was designed for students with a significant cognitive disability. This diploma option provided teachers with clear guidance on the high, but accessible, expectations for students with cognitive disabilities. It also provided students opportunities for more critical thinking, problem-solving and strategies for learning new information. All of these experiences are helping students meet their employment goals and accessing opportunities post-transition.

#### *Work-Based Learning*

Work-based learning experiences have been an important part of many transition programs across the state. This allows students with moderate to severe disabilities to learn job skills and work at different places throughout the school day. Local school districts form partnerships with businesses in the area to provide a variety of work experiences to students. These programs have seen significant growth in the past ten years, and the Department of Education (DOE) and VR continue to work to increase enrollment.





The Transition Tennessee web portal launched in 2017, which provided a “one-stop-shop” for all things transition. The goal was to improve transition outcomes for youth and young adults by sharing research-based practices and policies. This training platform, led by the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center and supported by the Department of Education and Vocational Rehabilitation, equipped educators with information and resources to prepare students for life after high school. Over the past six years, the information housed on the site has grown. It now also includes Pre-Employment Transition Supports (Pre-ETS) provider information, and there are interactive courses for students to learn more about how to meet their goals for education and employment after high school. Transition Tennessee now has more than 17,500 users accessing transition content.



## MIA BINNS

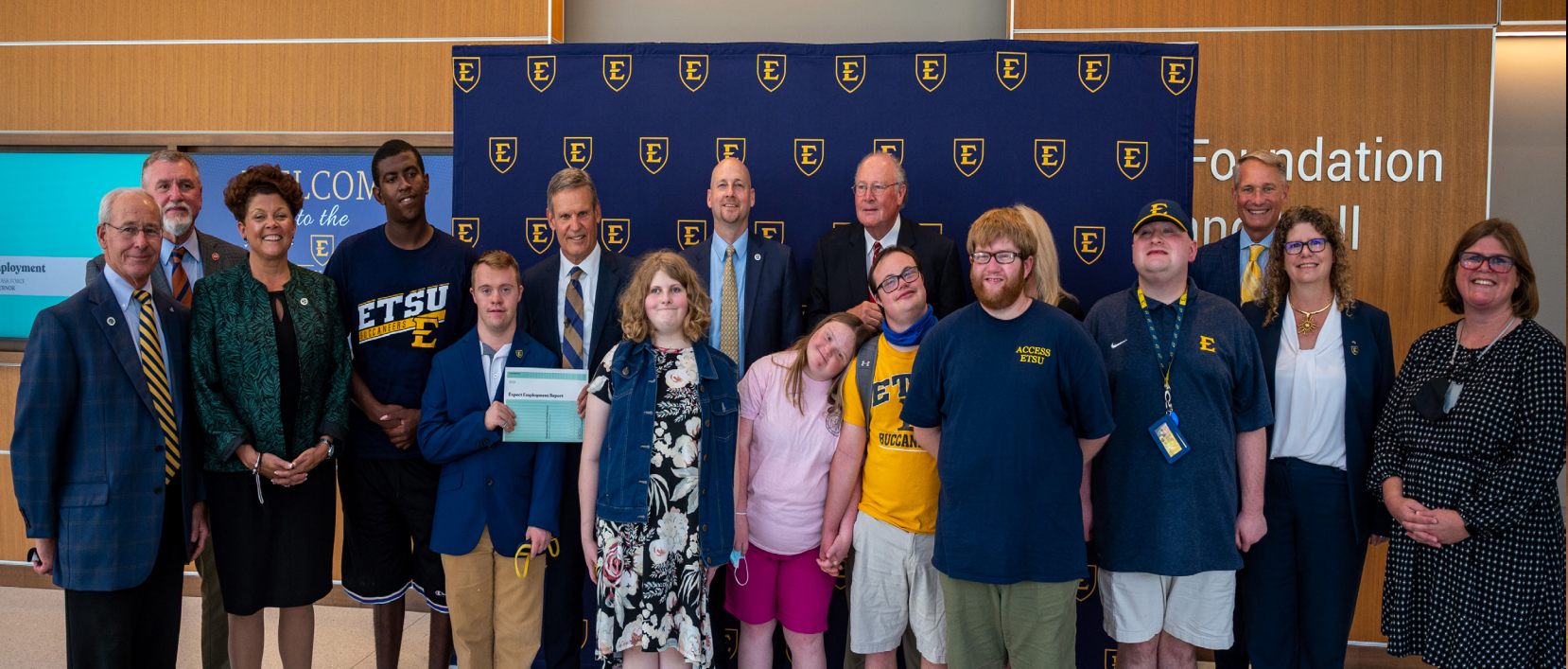
### *success story*

As the end of Mia Binns high school career neared, like most students, the pressing thought on her and her mother’s mind was, “what’s next?”. Mia’s lifelong dream has been to create and sell greeting cards and other art she’s produced. Her mom, Luz Belleza-Binns, has always wanted to do everything she can to support her daughter’s dream and ensure she’s successful after graduation in Spring 2023. She’s been advocating for her daughter and other

Tennesseans with disabilities since Mia was diagnosed with autism around two years old. One of the big steps to setting her daughter up for success was finding the right education and their family found that in Valor Prep College Charter School in Nashville.

While attending Valor Prep, Mia took art and other classes that supported her goals to build on her creative skills and gain the independence she desired. She was admitted to MNPS Community Based Training Program (CBTP) to gain advocacy, job, and social skills, and to start learning about transportation, increase her self-determination, and be prepared for independent living. With CBTP, and the continued support of ABA and Vocational Rehabilitation, she has been able to explore various career opportunities, practice skills, and learn how to rely on technology to complete her work tasks independently and increase her independence in all areas of her life. She works at Kroger and says she has enjoyed her job this year. “I did wipe down the windows and organized the frames. [I like] organizing things. Because it’s my favorite,” Mia said.

At home in her downstairs apartment, Mia is trying out an Alexa smart home device and a wristwatch to learn how to maintain her schedule and remind her to stay on task on the job. Meanwhile, she continues to draw her greeting cards and build up a collection as she takes these new steps toward her future. With the educational and employment supports, her mother believes Mia has a great community, support team, and plan in place for Mia to succeed as she transitions to adulthood.



## CHANGING THE SCHOOL TRANSITION LANDSCAPE *(CONTINUED)*

### *Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)*

Pre-ETS were started as a part of the state plan for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The goal was to increase focus and preparation on transition to employment at an earlier age. DOE and VR worked together to ensure five Pre-ETS are made available to students starting at the age of 14:

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

Students may choose any or all of them, and they are delivered through VR's contracted community rehabilitation providers. Since the start of Pre-ETS, the use of these services has grown significantly. The 2022-23 school year saw huge increases in the number of students receiving Pre-ETS, with over 7,000 students receiving services in February alone. On average, almost 500 more students per month received Pre-ETS during the 2022-23 school year compared with the previous school year. In addition, by using the Transition Tennessee web portal, more professionals were able to be trained on providing these services and accelerate the roll out to all corners of the state.





## INCLUSIVE HIGHER EDUCATION

### ***How Did Increasing Inclusive Higher Education Opportunities Move Employment First Forward?***

*More students across the state have the opportunity to attend college programs, experience inclusive campus life, and prepare for employment and independent living.*



Inclusive higher education opportunities in the state of Tennessee were available in the years before Executive Order No. 28. Next Steps at Vanderbilt, which started in 2010, was the first post-secondary program for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Tennessee. That number expanded to include six across the state by 2020, with the start of the Access ETSU program. The programs are between two and four years and provide opportunities for students to take classes alongside their peers without disabilities, experience student life on campus, grow their skills with the help of peer mentors, and prepare for employment and independent living.

These programs became more accessible to students when in 2015, Governor Haslam signed a law allowing TN STEP UP scholarships to be accessed for students attending an inclusive post-secondary education program. In 2021, the Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities launched Tennessee Believes, which provided grant funding to public and private institutions across Tennessee to start new programs and expand current programs. As a result, Tennessee now has its first inclusive program at a community college at Dyersburg State Community College and its first program at a Historically Black College or University (HBCU) at Tennessee State University.

Since inclusive higher education started in 2010, 560 students have completed one of the programs. Graduates of Tennessee's inclusive higher education program have a more than 80 percent rate of employment. Once the second round of Tennessee Believes funding has been awarded in August 2023, there will be a total of 9 schools providing inclusive postsecondary programs for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities.





# TREY EVANS

## *aspiring chef*

### TENNESSEE BELIEVES: TREY'S TENNESSEE BELIEVES KITCHEN STORY

Between the extra-large pizza dough in the oven, homemade pasta salad on the counter, and the chocolate covered strawberries that he made in the fridge, Trey Evans was standing right where he was meant to be. He and three other students learned to make various meals from scratch in the Tennessee Believes Kitchen at the University of Tennessee Knoxville (UTK). A local professional chef leads the class, teaching the group independent living skills and the experience needed to work in a restaurant kitchen. That's exactly the kind of job Trey is looking for.

"I do want to be a chef one day. I'm going to open my business to make people to love my food," Trey said. "Cooking class with Coach Robert is fun for me and I meet new people." He already has a business in the Knoxville area called Trey's Snack Shack, where he provides concessions for baseball and football games. The Tennessee Believes kitchen is getting Trey one step closer to realizing his dream of owning his own restaurant.

The UTK FUTURE postsecondary program for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities created the Tennessee Believes Kitchen with the support of DIDD's Tennessee Believes grant funding. It's available to students enrolled in their higher education program and to other community members with disabilities who are interested in gaining employment and independent living skills, like Trey. Each student receives a Chef's apron, food and cooking materials, mentor support, and an option to take the Knox County Food Certification test. Since its grand opening, the program has had multiple students graduate and at least one student who has gained employment utilizing the experience from the Tennessee Believes Kitchen.







## STATE AS A MODEL EMPLOYER (SAME)

### ***How Did SAME Move Employment First Forward?***

*Increased the number of internships for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in state government and provided a pathway to state employment.*

The first Expect Employment Report contained a recommendation to make Tennessee State Government a model employer for people with disabilities and expand internship opportunities. This recommendation became a part of the Employment First Task Force's strategic plans over the past ten years.

The SAME work started with an increase in internship opportunities for people with disabilities. State agencies, including DIDD, the Department of Economic and Community Development, the Department of Education, and the constituent services offices of both Gov. Haslam and Gov. Lee partnered with local inclusive higher education programs to offer internships. These internships give students the opportunity to develop important skills that aligned with their career interests, teach them how to interact with coworkers, participate in office environments and increase diversity within the state workforce. During the COVID pandemic, interns participated remotely and learned how to navigate remote working environments.

The efforts continued to expand when the Tennessee Department of Human Resources (DOHR) developed the Career Explorers program in 2019. This program offers students at Next Steps at Vanderbilt and the Lipscomb IDEAL Program the opportunity to learn more about different jobs and agencies within state government through six two-week rotations.

In 2021, the Tennessee General Assembly created the State as a Model Employer Act, which aims to make sure that state agencies and departments design and implement best practices related to the recruitment, hiring, promotion, and retention of qualified individuals with disabilities. This was an initiative long championed by the Employment First Task Force and is already yielding results to help the state better understand the number and needs of employees who have disabilities.





# CHRISTOPHER ARMSTRONG

## *success story*

### TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES & EMPLOYMENT COMMUNITY FIRST CHOICES

Christopher Armstrong is a kind young man with an infectious smile, bubbly personality and a love for shopping, cuisine drawing, comics, models, The Avengers movie series and trains. Anyone who meets Mr. Armstrong notices his ability to engage others with friendly, fun and lighthearted conversation. When Employment and Community First (ECF) CHOICES referred him to the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program at the Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) it was evident that he had a desire to work in an area that allowed him to interact with members of his community. With the help of VR community rehabilitation provider (CRP) Employability and his representative Todd Edge, Mr. Armstrong obtained a position with PopShelf as a sales associate in late 2022.

Working at PopShelf in brought Mr. Armstrong satisfaction, but it also came with challenges. He worked extremely hard to learn his job role despite his concerns that he would not pass the probationary period. When hired, Mr. Armstrong was assigned a concrete schedule however, abrupt, and inconsistent schedule and staffing changes and adjusting to coworkers with different personalities left him feeling perplexed, creating an atmosphere of uncertainty. Mr. Edge worked with Mr. Armstrong's managers to facilitate a workable resolution that was agreeable to Mr. Armstrong and his coworkers that created a more suitable work environment.

With the support of his VR counselor, CRP, Mr. Edge and caregiver, Ruth Woodson, Mr. Armstrong gained more confidence in working through the challenges and accepting the constant changes that were required of him. His work performance excelled over time, exceeded managerial expectations, which led to more work responsibility. In February 2023, Mr. Armstrong received the "Employee of the Month" award along with a congratulatory lunch with his manager and Mr. Edge to celebrate his accomplishment and performance.

"Christopher always put in the effort and always was willing to try. He didn't expect it to be handed to him; he worked very hard. He's always the 'go to guy' if they needed someone to help; he is always ready to step up and do what it takes" commented Mr. Edge regarding Mr. Armstrong's work ethic. Mr. Armstrong himself credits patience, consistency and encouragement from his CRP, Mr. Edge, his caregiver, Ms. Woodson, and his VR counselor and his faith in God as reasons for his success.

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me," said Mr. Armstrong and commented on his VR experience stating "VR was real good. Everyone was concerned about me. They helped me and helped me in my success and wellbeing."



# VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

## ***How Did Changes within Vocational Rehabilitation Move Employment First Forward?***

*By transforming to meet the needs of its customers and provide a more person-centered, integrated employment training experience and increasing its partnerships with local employers to help meet workforce needs*



Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is not new to the state of Tennessee. In fact, the vast majority of job programs for people with disabilities in Tennessee partner with VR for job training and development. However, in alignment with the Employment First movement in Tennessee, the program has made drastic changes over the past ten years to modernize its service delivery and better meet the needs of its customers and the Tennessee workforce.

In 2017, Tennessee's VR program, in partnership with the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities, began a transformation journey to enhance and improve service delivery. This included working on improving responsiveness and implementing person-centered practices across the division. It eliminated subminimum wage at its Tennessee Rehabilitation Centers and changed the mission and name of the Tennessee Rehabilitation Centers (TRCs) to the VR Community Services Unit to reflect the community-based services focus of the centers. To further its work on employer engagement, it created the Business Services Unit to partner with employers and support their workforce needs and business operations.

In addition, VR has improved its services for those who are blind, deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing, including providing access to quality sign language interpreting services.

## **STEVEN MOON** *success story*



### **TENNESSEE MENTAL HEALTH CONSUMERS ASSOCIATION & TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**

Steven Moon is a 52-year-old grandfather who found himself looking for work opportunities that would allow him to pick up his grandson from school and retain his SSDI benefits. He held a deep desire to work part time, possibly in a factory setting, but he just wanted to work.

Mr. Moon was previously diagnosed with psychosocial impairment due to depressive and other mood disorders, diabetes, and some orthopedic impairments due to an accident. With an unwavering desire to work, he found a positive support with the Tennessee Mental Health Consumers Association (TMHCA) who referred him to the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program at the Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS).

Mr. Moon had a "good experience" with his VR and TMHCA partners who helped him achieve employment. VR worked with TMHCA to provide employment services via the Individual Placement and Support program. After receiving counseling and guidance from his VR Counselor and working to understand potential and existing barriers, Mr. Moon and his TMHCA Employment Specialist collaborated to address these barriers and find employment that met his needs.

Mr. Moon now holds a janitorial position with CW Resources at Arnold Air Force Base, earning a wage of \$16.22 per hour, an increase from his starting hourly wage of \$14.21. His work gives him the flexibility he needs to spend time with his grandson and retain his benefits. Although he took a temporary leave to undergo two surgeries, he remained optimistic, returned to work in January 2023 and states that "the job is going well" and he is "glad to be back to work."

**PROGRESS**

- Identify and eliminate barriers and disincentives to employment for people with disabilities.

## WHERE WE WERE

Ten years ago, there were widespread misconceptions among the employer community and general public about employment for people with disabilities. Services and supports were not designed to provide opportunities for people to learn about jobs in the community, and there were no technology alternatives when providers experienced shortages of disability professionals.

## TEN YEARS LATER, HOW DID WE DO?

While progress has no finish line, there have been substantial improvements made to reduce barriers to employment. Subminimum wage is banned in the state of Tennessee. More people are able to learn about how a job in the community can benefit them and use Enabling Technology to work more independently. Employers and the public at large are more educated about how people with disabilities can contribute to the workforce.

## ELIMINATING SUBMINIMUM WAGES

***Barrier Eliminated: The longstanding practice of paying people with disabilities less than minimum wage has been banned in Tennessee.***

For many years, employers across the nation used 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. Subminimum wages were common in many sheltered workshops across Tennessee. For the past ten years, the Employment First Task Force encouraged its service providers — which are eligible to obtain 14(c) certificates — to end the practice of paying subminimum wages. While progress was initially slow, it sped up toward the end of the 2010s. While there were 63 14(c) certificates in 2016, there were only 15 by 2019. Paired with technical assistance from the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), providers were able to successfully close their sheltered workshops and support those working there to transition into competitive, integrated employment.

In 2022, the practice of paying subminimum wages came to an end in Tennessee when state lawmakers passed a law barring the practice. This was a monumental achievement in the Employment First landscape in Tennessee and a step forward for more equitable and inclusive workplaces.



## PRE-EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

***Barrier Reduced: People in established long term services and supports program have more opportunities to learn about competitive, integrated employment and work more independently.***

While many new services and supports have been designed over the past ten years to support a person's employment goals, it was also important to make sure people who were already in the state's long-term services and supports programs had the opportunity to learn about working in the community. Facility-based services were very common and oftentimes gave people with disabilities no opportunities to interact with people without disabilities outside of paid staff. There were two major developments that helped support the transformation of work opportunities in the state's existing waiver programs for people with disabilities. The first was the Home and Community Based Settings Rule, which required that all services, including employment and day services, be provided in integrated community settings. The second was making key changes to employment and day services in the state's 1915(c) waivers in 2020. This included adding important pre-employment services, such as Exploration, Discovery and Job Development, to help people understand what a job in the community could look like and how their skills and interests might make them a fit for a variety of different job roles. In addition, the changes included incentives for reducing job coaching and allowing a person to work more independently, and also offered provider incentives based on increasing the number of hours a person worked.

Finally, DIDD and TennCare have added the Employment Informed Choice process to the 1915(c) waivers to make sure everyone has a chance to learn about employment before making a decision on whether or not work is for them.

## WARRICK MIKAELIAN

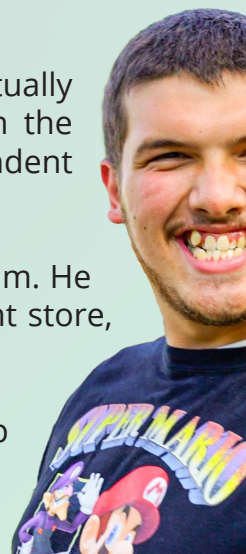
### success story

#### MAPS PROGRAM: WARRICK'S STORY

With high school graduation quickly approaching, Warrick Mikaelian knew he eventually wanted to work and live on his own. This summer, he began building skills with the technology and support he receives through the MAPs program to be more independent at home, at work, and in his community!

To start building his independence, Warrick decided what goals were important to him. He knew the very first goal he wanted to accomplish was to visit his favorite convenient store, Golden Bear, on his own.

Warrick and his MAPs team began building his Virtual Community Resource Map (VCRM). A VCRM is a customizable map used by participants in the MAPs program. Each person's map identifies the people, places, and activities important to them. Warrick's VCRM includes his independence goals as well as tips, tools, and reminders.



# ENABLING TECHNOLOGY

***Barrier Reduced: Enabling Technology can support people to travel to their jobs independently and work without a job coach.***

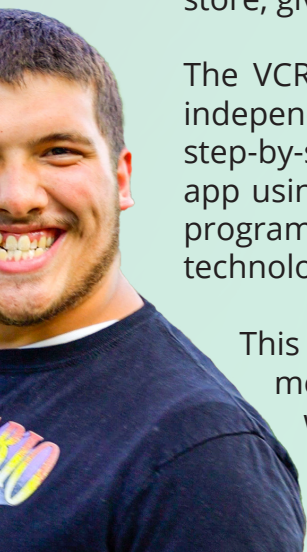
The goal of all programs is to set people with disabilities up for success in their jobs and give them the opportunity to work as independently as possible. As mentioned above, providing incentives for hours worked and fading job coaching is a part of that solution. However, the growth of Enabling Technology has been a game changer in promoting independence at home, at work and in the community. DIDD started its Enabling Technology program as a state-funded pilot in 2018. Since that time, it has grown to include a variety of technologies that support employment, including virtual reality pre-employment services, remote job coaching, and technology-supported use of public transportation. The number of people in both the 1915(c) waivers and the ECF CHOICES program has exploded since 2018, with approximately 750 people using some type of Enabling Technology to support them.

In November 2022, the use of Enabling Technology to support people at home and work took another step forward with the start of the Medicaid Alternative Pathways to Independence (MAPs) Program. Enabling Technology is the foundation of this program, which sets both transition-aged youth and adults up for success by equipping them with tools and teaching them the skills they need to live independently, find jobs and hobbies that interest them, and develop relationships with members of their communities. More than 100 people are finding greater levels of independence and reaching their community and employment goals through this program.

Before heading out for a trip to Golden Bear, Warrick checks his VCRM. It prompts him to let his parents know he's leaving the house and make sure he has enough money to purchase his drinks and snacks. His VCRM guides him on his route to the convenience store, giving him tips and safety reminders along the way.

The VCRM is not the only Enabling Technology Warrick is using to help increase his independence. He also uses the AbleLink Visual Impact app on his MAPs phone to follow step-by-step instructions on household tasks like laundry. He created steps within the app using videos that walk him through the task in his own words. Through the MAPs program, Warrick can test different Enabling Technology apps and devices to see how technology can support him to reach his goals.

This summer, Warrick's increased independence means meeting new people, learning to be safe when traveling around his community, and building skills to help him reach his next goal of finding a job.





# EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

***Barrier Reduced but Remains: While much has been done to increase awareness, there is still a great need for more businesses to hire people with disabilities.***

Employer engagement has been a primary barrier to increasing the number of people with disabilities in the workplace and closing the employment gap. Over the past ten years, employers have expressed concerns about liability, costly accommodations that may be needed, attendance and safety. Through various engagement efforts, members of the Employment First Task Force and state agencies have worked hard to debunk some of these myths and educate employers about the positive business case for hiring people with disabilities. These efforts have included hard work on the grassroots level, as job coaches and job developers have worked in their individual communities to match people's job skills with willing employers, as well as high-level efforts by various agency commissioners to make the case to large corporations and chambers of commerce across the state.

While great strides have been made to reduce this barrier, including training employers and increasing outreach, there is still more work to be done and will continue to be a focus of the task force for years to come.

"I am here to show people that it is possible that it can be done. You may just have to make reasonable accommodations for the individual in order for them to be successful at their work. But how do you create a culture of acceptance in the work environment if you're not hiring people with disabilities?"

*Clancey Hopper*





**PARTNERSHIP**



# PARTNERSHIP

- Identify effective partnerships and opportunities for shared services among existing state agencies.

## WHERE WE WERE

Prior to Executive Order No. 28, several state agencies were offering services and supports to help people with disabilities obtain employment. However, each agency's work was siloed, and there was a lack of coordination among state agencies to bridge gaps and transition people along the employment journey. Communications and outreach about Employment First was often left to the individual state agencies, and rarely were messages able to reach people outside of a department's established stakeholder groups.

## TEN YEARS LATER, HOW DID WE DO?

The Employment Task Force has been meeting quarterly for ten years now, and more state agencies and private partners have joined the task force. By working together on the strategic plans, new programs have been able to scale up more quickly because of the coordination, education and buy-in from task force members. Task Force workgroups have helped address service gaps in Transportation and Mental Health supports. Agency communicators and private partners work together to coordinate messaging and spread the word about Employment First across the state using social media, blogs, webcasts and other communications channels.

## EMPLOYMENT ROUNDTABLE

The Employment Roundtable is led by the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities and brings together state agency employees to make sure they are working together to coordinate employment services and supports. More than 20 representatives across 13 state agencies and the Tennessee Developmental Disabilities Network come together on a quarterly basis to problem solve and collaborate on specific issues. Relationship building among those agencies and partners has been important to supporting specific people to reach their employment goals and moving forward emerging initiatives and programs.

A primary focus of the Employment Roundtable is improving supports for youth transitioning out of high school. That includes making sure the Memorandum of Understanding for Transitioning Youth is being followed and the Roundtable members address any issues that arise.

## ROUNDTABLE MEMBERS

Council on Developmental Disabilities  
Commission on Children & Youth  
Department of Children's Services  
Department of Education  
Department of Health  
Department of Human Resources  
Department of Human Services  
Department of Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities  
Department of Labor  
Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services  
Division of TennCare  
Department of Transportation  
Department of Treasury  
(DD Network partners) Disability Rights Tennessee  
(DD Network partners) Vanderbilt Kennedy Center



WATCH  
VIDEO



## TASK FORCE WORKGROUPS

The Employment First Task Force has maintained various workgroups over the years to help address specific goals outside of the quarterly task force meetings. This has included workgroups for Families, Community Providers, Data, Transportation, Mental Health and Communications, among others.

Over the past ten years these workgroups have been instrumental in guiding the task force's work: from participating in the community conversations that helped set the task force's goals, to improving coordination on addressing employment for people with both a mental health diagnosis and IDD, to helping to address the transportation issues preventing people from accessing employment.

Several groups continue to meet on a regular basis and have taken ownership of specific sections of the task force's strategic plan.

By providing opportunities for subject matter experts to meet regularly on specific issues, these workgroups have elevated the work of the Employment First Task Force and provided solutions to some of the most challenging barriers to expanding employment for people with disabilities.



# EMPLOYMENT FIRST TASK FORCE Strategic Plan

*2022-2023 Progress*

# EMPLOYMENT FIRST TASK FORCE STRATEGIC PLAN

## GOAL 1: SERVICE ALIGNMENT

### PURPOSE:

- Make sure employment programs work together so that it's easier for the customer to find and use those programs.

### PROGRESS:

- Reached the "Close the Gap" goal and reduced the employment gap by 5.2 percent
- Eight state agencies have signed the Memorandum of Understanding for serving transition age youth to find employment after leaving high school.
- The Office of Mobility and Accessible Transportation (OMAT) conducted a needs assessment on accessible transportation. The Employment First Task Force assisted in this task. Based on the results, is designing a "Jobs Access Program" for people with disabilities who need accessible transportation to get to work.

### PARTNERSHIP:

- State agencies are continuing to work together to make services easier for the customer to use. This includes working together to train every American Job Center to better support customers with disabilities as they search for work.

## GOAL 2: TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

### PURPOSE:

- Make sure employment programs offer technology to support people with disabilities in employment.

### PROGRESS:

- As of June 2023, there are 396 people in the DIDD waivers using Enabling Technology, 45 percent more than in 2021. Since November 2021, ECF CHOICES and CHOICES also now offer Enabling Technology, with 350 people using the service.
- DIDD held its first Power Up! Tech Camp in October 2022, where 32 campers learned more about how Enabling Technology might help them to meet their goals.
- DIDD and Vocational Rehabilitation launched a travel training program in Clarksville, where participants were able to learn how to use AbleLink's WayFinder application to use public transportation independently.

### PARTNERSHIP:

- DIDD, Tennessee Disability Pathfinder, the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities and the AWS Foundation partnered together to create Tennessee Tech Connect. This is an Enabling Technology Database hosted on Tennessee Disability Pathfinder's website that will let users select the technology goals they would like to achieve, and then learn how Enabling Technology can help them reach those goals. This includes providing specific solutions available to the person, selecting technology based on age and disability, and find technology providers in their area.



# EMPLOYMENT FIRST TASK FORCE STRATEGIC PLAN (CONTINUED)

## GOAL 3: EMPLOYERS

### PURPOSE:

- Increase the number of employers who value and hire people with disabilities.

### PROGRESS:

- Laid the groundwork to officially recognize employers who value disability employment. Launched a pilot recognition program in June 2023.
- Launched State as a Model Employer (SAME) Internship Program Pilot. This matches Vocational Rehabilitation students at the Tennessee Rehabilitation Center (TRC) with an internship opportunity at a state agency. This began with a TRC student interning at the Department of Safety as a Driver's License Examiner at the Springfield Driver Services Center.
- Created communication and a presentation to send to chambers of commerce across the state about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities. The workgroup held briefings attended by seven chambers of commerce.
- Developed a survey for businesses to understand how to support them in hiring and employment of people with disabilities.



### PARTNERSHIP:

- The Department of Human Resources (DOHR), Department of Human Services and TennCare comprised the employer's workgroup. The workgroup developed relationships with chambers of commerce across the state as well as state agencies to increase hiring not only at the state level, but also within private businesses.

# EMPLOYMENT FIRST TASK FORCE

## STRATEGIC PLAN (CONTINUED)

### GOAL 4: COMMUNITY AWARENESS

#### PURPOSE:

- Build awareness and shared commitment to Employment First. This means all Tennesseans will believe that everyone can work with the right supports.

#### PROGRESS:

- Collaborated to create graphic elements for upcoming inclusive employer recognition
- Spotlighted the Individualized Placement and Support (IPS) model at the 2022 Expect Employment Report celebration with Gov. Lee
- Developed and began implementation on a Purpose, Progress, Partnership communication plan to highlight the 10-year anniversary of Employment First in Tennessee from June 13, 2023, through National Disability Employment Awareness month in October
- Revamped the Hire My Strengths campaign to showcase the variety of talents that Tennesseans with disabilities bring to the workforce and increasing employer awareness through outreach

#### PARTNERSHIP:

- The Communications subgroup meets at least quarterly to collaborate on community awareness efforts. Members use social media to share employment success stories and elevate awareness efforts, such as the “Hire My Strengths” campaign.

### GOAL 5: STUDENT TRANSITION

#### PURPOSE:

- Prepare students for life after high school.

#### PROGRESS:

- The Department of Education and Department of Human Services continue to work to increase students’ enrollment into Work-Based Learning experience and Career and Technical Education.
- Provided extensive training for transition stakeholders in the past year. Full-day Transition Summer Academies had 595 attendees, and more than 1000 people attended 35 stakeholder trainings. There were also 11 transition-focused webcasts with about 900 attendees.

#### PARTNERSHIP:

- Transition Tennessee is a collaboration between the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center, the Department of Education and the Department of Human Services. It also partners with other agencies to offer informational resources to student, teachers and families to help prepare them for life after transition.



# 10 YEARS OF EMPLOYMENT FIRST

## *Work in Progress*

The state of Tennessee has made great strides in improving the employment landscape for people with disabilities over the past ten years. Being able to meet targets on closing the employment gap and improving how employment supports are offered across state agencies has no doubt led to many more meaningful jobs and lives for people with disabilities.

DIDD Commissioner Brad Turner often tells people his goal is to work himself out of a job, where people with disabilities are included and woven into the fabric of communities so much that there isn't the need for a state agency to provide advocacy and support. That is a lofty goal that we hope to meet, but we are not there yet. Agency and Advocacy supports and awareness are still critical to the success of the Employment First movement, and the Task Force still has much left to do.

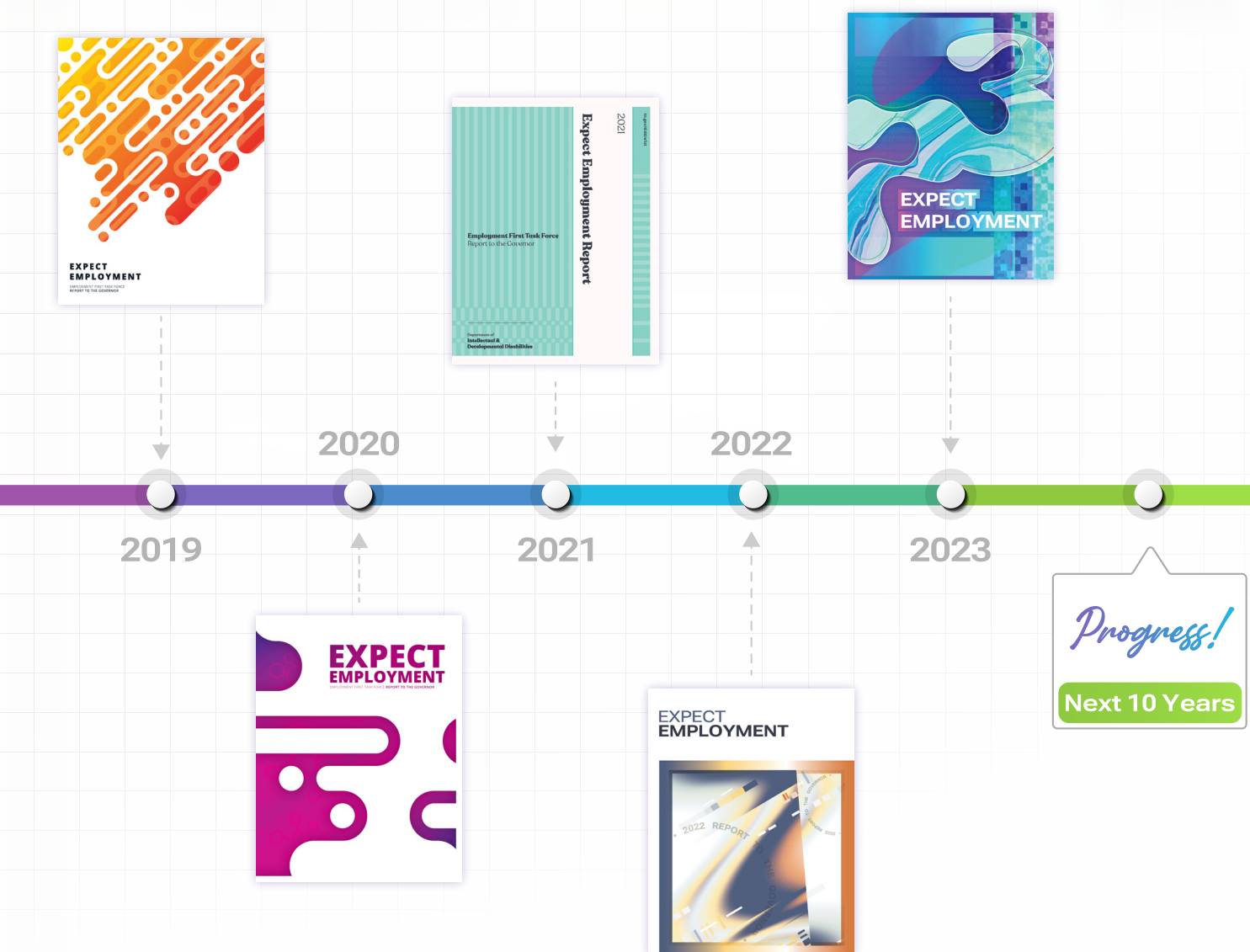


So, what does the next ten years of Employment First look like?

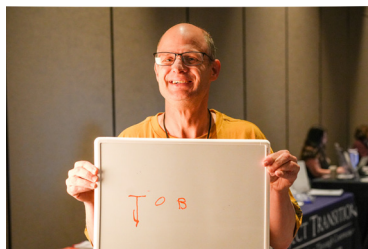
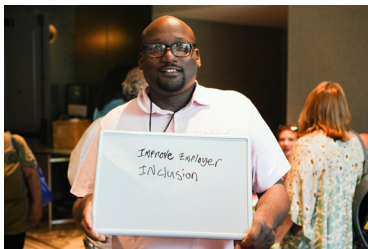
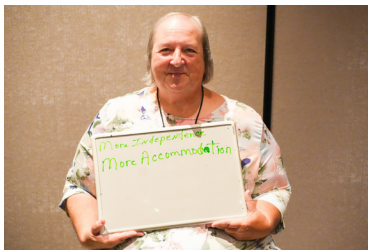
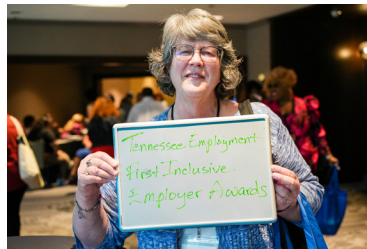
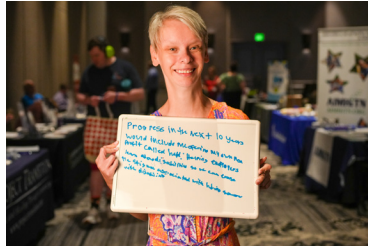
Some areas task members identified for improvement include:

- **Continuing to bridge the gap between school and employment.** This includes improving educators' knowledge of the adult system and increasing career and technical education and paid work experiences for students with disabilities while still in high school.
- **Increasing employer investment in Employment First.** There is still a great need to connect local businesses with the available workforce and find more employers to be champions for hiring people with disabilities. Until there are more businesses willing to hire people with disabilities, the employment gap will still exist.
- **Improving access to transportation for people with disabilities.** There are many people who have jobs or want jobs that can't find a way to get to a job. This is especially true in rural areas without transit or people who have access to public transportation but need to travel across county lines for employment.

With ten years of tremendous progress to build on, there is much hope that the next ten years will bring about continued improvements in some of these challenging areas. The task force will continue to evolve to meet the changing workforce demands and new barriers that may arise as we look to continue to close the gap and make sure everyone person who wants a job, has access to meaningful, fulfilling employment.







# EMPLOYMENT FIRST

*The next 10 years*

# APPENDICES

A / EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 28

B / EMPLOYMENT FIRST TASK FORCE MEMBERS



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 **19<sup>th</sup>** day of **June, 2013**.

ATTEST:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
SECRETARY OF STATE



  
\_\_\_\_\_  
GOVERNOR

# EMPLOYMENT FIRST TASK FORCE MEMBERS

## EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM

**Jordan Allen,**

*Deputy Commissioner of Program Operations, Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*

**Carrie Brna,**

*Director of Employment Innovation & Community Inclusion, Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*

**Elise McMillan,**

*Co-Director, Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities*

**Lauren Percy,**

*Executive Director, Council on Developmental Disabilities*

## MEMBERS

*Kevin Wright, Assistant Commissioner of the Division of Rehabilitation Services, Department of Human Services*

*Sundi Wright, HR Administrator, Diversity Programs, Department of Human Resources*

*Emily Duchac, Mobility and Accessible Transportation Manager, Department of Transportation*

*Heidi Haines, Executive Director, The Arc Tennessee*

*Stephanie Connell Cowherd, Associate Director, University of Tennessee-Center for Literacy, Education and Employment*

*Doria Panvini, Parent Advocate*

*William McMillan, Self Advocate*

*Dwayne Webb, Director of Day & Employment, St. John's Community Services*

*Pam Hollingsworth, Employment Services Director, Progress Inc.*

*Robert Nicholas, Coordinator, Project SEARCH Knoxville*

*Erik Carter, Professor, Vanderbilt University and Vanderbilt Kennedy Center*

*Cara Kumari, Assistant Commissioner of Communications and External Affairs, Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*

*Krystyne Brown, Deputy Director of Communications and External Affairs, Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*

*Nakeisha Ricks, Director of Workforce Services, Department of Labor and Workforce Development*

*Alison Gauld, Low Incidence and Autism Coordinator, Department of Education*

*Blake Shearer, Transition Director, Division of Rehabilitation Services, Department of Human Services*

*Jeff Fladen, Executive Director, NAMI Tennessee*

*Kelly Kuhns, Employment Director, Employment and Community First CHOICES, Division of TennCare*

*Lisa Primm, Executive Director, Disability Rights Tennessee*

*Matthew Parriott, Director of Communication, Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services*

*Janet Shouse, Disability Employment Specialist, TennesseeWorks*

*Ruth Brock, Program Supervisor, Supported Employment, Department of Human Services*

*Cristi Blalock, Employment Services Coordinator, Frontier Health*

*Stephanie Potter, Employment Specialist, Amerigroup*

*Tiffany Kelley, Sensory Director, Department of Human Services*

*Tiffany Ramsey, Vocational Rehabilitation Services Director, Department of Human Services*

*Jacqueline Johnson, Section Chief, Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs, Department of Health*

*Ellyn Wilbur, Executive Director, Tennessee Association of Mental Health Organizations*

*Jessica Awsumb, Research Assistant Professor, Vanderbilt University*

*Ben Schwartzman, Research Assistant Professor, Vanderbilt University*

*Mark Liverman, Director of Wellness and Employment, Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services*

*Nichole Phillips, LTSS Employment Services & Supports Specialist, BlueCare*

*Aimee Rogers, LTSS Employment Services & Supports Specialist, BlueCare*  
*Tiffanie Whitaker, Statewide IPS Trainer*

*Sebby Edwards, Employment Specialist, UnitedHealthCare Corporation*

*Carla Garrett, Youth Grant Program Manager, Department of Labor & Workforce Development*

*John Camperlino, Employment Specialist, United Healthcare Corporation*

*Tina Jones, Employment Specialist, Amerigroup*

*Kendra Mitchell, Program Director, Department of Health*

*Bruce Keisling, Executive Director, UT Center on Developmental Disabilities*



