

# Navigating for Success: A Strategic Plan for Employment First for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities In Maryland

## Developed in partnership with:

The Developmental Disabilities Administration  
The Maryland Department of Disabilities  
Employment First State Leadership Team

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## A Letter from the Partners

Every working age Marylander with a disability, including those with the most significant disabilities, must have access to opportunities which lead to employment in competitive, integrated settings.” Governor Hogan’s charge in the Workforce Innovation Opportunities Act State Plan sets the stage for Maryland to execute a full commitment to Employment First.

Many businesses choose to locate in Maryland to access one of the country’s most diverse and talented workforces. Many Marylanders with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) currently participate in this workforce, while others have the talent and determination to make valuable contributions to employers but have been left out of the general workforce. The development of this comprehensive five-year strategic plan for Employment First will guide policy makers as they eliminate barriers and promote best practices for increasing the number of Marylanders with I/DD working in paid, competitive jobs throughout the state.

Maryland’s Employment First initiative is led by representatives of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH), Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA), and the Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) as they partner with other state agencies and community stakeholders, including the dedicated members of the Maryland Employment First Leadership Team. This five-year strategic plan was created in a collaborative effort as we change Maryland for the better by increasing the number of people with I/DD contributing to the workforce.

The outcomes and goals within the plan aim to align policies, funding, and supports and to eliminate barriers to workforce participation for people with I/DD. In addition, the plan focuses on creating the capacity within Maryland to assist job seekers as they identify their potential contributions towards Maryland's diverse workforce. Annually, for five years, the Employment First Leadership Team will collaborate to create a work plan which operationalizes the strategic plan outcomes and goals.

We look forward to changing the lives of Marylanders with I/DD, including those with significant support needs, who want to work to earn income and meaningfully participate in

their communities.

Sincerely,

Carol A. Beatty, Secretary Maryland Department of Disabilities

Bernard Simons, Deputy Secretary Developmental Disabilities Administration

## About Employment First

### Philosophy

Employment First is based on the belief that all people with I/DD can make unique contributions to the workforce through competitive, integrated employment. It is the role of the job seeker with a disability, professionals and others supporting them to identify the person's unique talents that contribute to an employer.

### Practice

As a practice, Employment First means state policies, models of service and funding structures are aligned to decrease barriers so people can get and keep the work they enjoy and do well.

### What is Competitive Integrated Employment?

Jobs held by people with I/DD in workplaces where the majority of people employed are not people with disabilities;

Employees with I/DD are paid at least minimum wage and are paid directly by the employer who is not the support agency; and

Employees with I/DD may receive supports by an employment support agency and/or the employer in ways that the employee can learn and perform tasks associated with the job.

### Maryland's Participation in Employment First:

DDA and their stakeholders first partnered in 2008 to craft an Employment First policy which stated employment should be the first option discussed with someone entering the service system. On July 17, 2015, under the leadership of Deputy Secretary Bernard Simons, Maryland's DDA reenergized the discussion around Employment First when stakeholders gathered to celebrate progress and identify barriers and solutions to increase employment outcomes for people with I/DD. During the year following the kickoff, members of State agencies and other stakeholders spent countless hours identifying current barriers, applying for and implementing grants, offering training, and creating a plan to move Maryland from being an Employment First state in policy to an Employment First State in practice.

# A Voyage Imagined

## The Why

People with I/DD want to live meaningful lives with jobs and income. Having a job and earning income opens doors to home ownership and opportunities for growth and learning.

Employment holds the potential for forming friendships and expanding one's social connectedness. Contributing to the community and being paid for one's contributions in the workforce promotes a sense of value and belonging.

Despite landmark legislation on the federal and state levels to promote competitive, integrated employment for people with I/DD (see appendix 1), the majority of job seekers with I/DD are under-employed or unemployed. In May of 2015, 18.5% or 2,165 people receiving DDA day service supports in Maryland worked in competitive, integrated employment. While the unemployment rate for the state of Maryland was 4.6%, the unemployment rate for people with I/DD was 84.5%. At the same time, data from the National Core Indicators (a DDA satisfaction survey) revealed 60% of adults with I/DD not currently working would like to work. These numbers served as a catalyst for Marylanders with I/DD, state disability leaders, and government agencies to renew the commitment to a collaborative focus on making meaningful, competitive, integrated employment and/or self-employment a reality for all Marylanders. Critical steps to increasing employment outcomes can be found in Appendix 5.

## Michael

Michael is self-employed. He owns his own vending machine business. He works all aspects of the business from inventory, stocking, pricing, and finances. He is saving some of his profits to expand his business to other locations. Michael says, "The best part of owning my own business is being my own boss. I get to decide what to sell and for how much. I don't make a lot of money, but it's my business and I make the decisions."

## The Crew

Maryland's strategic plan for Employment First is the culmination of the work done by more than 175 community stakeholders in cooperation with multiple state agencies. The plan's implementation is guided by the Maryland Employment First State Leadership Team (see appendix 2). Through town hall meetings, State gatherings, and other outreach efforts, the input was gathered from key stakeholders. DDA then established workgroups to address specific components needed to make Employment First a reality for all Marylanders with I/DD. The workgroups have worked through the past year to create outcomes and goals. The groups are comprised of people receiving supports, their family members, and disability professionals. Grants of national importance (see appendix 3) were secured to create opportunities for technical assistance from subject matter experts to assist Maryland in creating public policies, supporting provider transformation pilots and offering training to people being supported, their families, and providers of services, including their workforce.

## Work Group Members and Employment First State Leadership Team

The Arc Maryland	Statewide advocacy organization working to create a world where children and adults with I/DD have and enjoy equal rights and opportunities
APSE, Maryland Chapter	National organization dedicated to advancing Employment First policies and practices
The Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA)	State agency that offers funding for people with I/DD to live a life of meaning.
The Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)	State agency that offers programs and services that help people with disabilities go to work.
Families	Families that direct their son or daughter's supports as well as those accessing traditional supports
People With Disabilities	People with disabilities that receive DDA supports, self-direct their own services and those who receive traditionally funded supports.
Maryland Association of Community Services (MACS)	Membership organization dedicated to strengthening agencies to better support people with I/DD and their families in their own communities.
Maryland Department of Disabilities	A State agency whose mission is to change Maryland for the better by promoting equality of opportunity, access, and choice for Marylanders with disabilities through direct services and policy coordination.
Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council	An advocacy organization advancing the inclusion of people with I/DD in all facets of community life by eliminating barriers, creating opportunities, empowering people, and promoting innovation.
Maryland Disability Law Center	MDLC is the protection and advocacy agency that envisions a world where people with disabilities are fully included in the workplace, neighborhoods and all aspects of community life.
Maryland State Department of Education Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services (MSDE/DSE/EIS)	MSDE/DSI/EIS provides leadership, support and accountability for results to local school systems, public agencies and stakeholders through a seamless, comprehensive system of coordinated services to children and students with disabilities, birth through 21, and their families.
Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation (DLLR)	A State department that provides job development and employment training to help citizens get the skills and expertise they need to move with our economy into Maryland's future

Maryland Works	A statewide membership organization that expands employment and business ownership opportunities for people with disabilities and other barriers to employment.
People on the Go and other self-advocacy groups	People with I/DD who use their voices to be heard and recognized.
Service Providers and Coordination of Community Services	DDA licensed agencies who provide day habilitation, employment, CCS and residential supports participated as both members and team leaders.

## Plotting the Course

### The How

## Employment First Strategic Planning Process

1. **Gathering Information:** Stakeholders provided input through ongoing community forums; town hall meetings listening sessions and regional meetings. Review and research federal and state policies, professional journal articles about best practice.
2. **Setting a Vision:** The DDA Transformation Plan: Competitive Integrated Employment will be the first option for all working age youth and adults with I/DD.
3. **Engaging Stakeholders:** Stakeholders had multiple and ongoing opportunities to learn about and give feedback through work groups, regional meetings; monthly state webinars; monthly ODEP webinars; quarterly training and peer support. Information, webinars and additional resources have been posted on the DDA website.
4. **Creating the Employment First Strategic Plan:** Coordinated effort including input from self-advocates, families, professionals, and state leaders including the Employment First State Leadership Team.
5. **Implementing The Employment First Strategic Plan:** This strategic plan for Employment First will have an annual work plan developed by stakeholders throughout Maryland, and will include making amendments to the Community Pathways Waiver; changing funding models; training and technical assistance for all levels of agency staff, families, and job seekers; exploring a training and technical assistance entity; and obtaining and implementing grants.
6. **Collecting the Data:** DDA and other stakeholders will utilize DDA's current data system for analysis and policy setting. Data will be used to track progress on each step of the strategic plan. Additional data may be taken per stratified subgroups as necessary or required (see appendix 4).

## Brian

Brian is my favorite employee at Sniders” is the comment from a frequent shopper at Sniders grocery store in Silver Spring., Maryland where he has been working for 22 years.

During an interview with Brian and his mom, his employment staff learned the family shopped at Sniders grocery store. The employment staff contacted Sniders and they began to customize a job that matched both Sniders’ needs and Brian’s skills. Today, Brian works 5 days a week, has developed a community of his own and has even taken up line dancing with his co-workers.

## Setting Sail

### The What

### Strategic Plan Outcomes

## To Achieve Competitive Integrated Employment for Working Age Marylanders with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

- 1. COMMITMENT:** Marylanders with I/DD and their families understand Employment First values and practices as DDA demonstrates the commitment to Employment First in policies, communication practices, and funding models.
- 2. COLLABORATION:** Marylanders with I/DD and their families are supported to live and work in their communities through collaborative efforts among state and local government, service providers, and their communities.
- 3. POLICIES:** Competitive, integrated employment is the first option for all Marylanders with I/DD of working age receiving funding support from the DDA.
- 4. FUNDING:** Marylanders with I/DD, regardless of the level of support they need, have services and supports to have a meaningful life, including competitive integrated employment.
- 5. SERVICES:** Marylanders with I/DD are supported to live and work in their communities through person-centered supports.
- 6. TRAINING:** Marylanders with I/DD are supported by knowledgeable and skilled direct support professionals and providers of employment services. Training and technical assistance are available for all stakeholders.
- 7. EVALUATION:** Policy changes and funding decisions are data-informed.

## Setting Sail

### The “What”

### Employment First Maryland

#### EVALUATION

TRAINING  
SERVICES  
FUNDING  
POLICIES  
COLLABORATION

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