

# Competitive Employment Capacity Building

## Starting points to increase employment for people with disabilities

The purpose of this document is to spark dialogue and support your local planning efforts to improve employment outcomes for the people you serve. In your efforts, consider these evidence based practices to develop your next steps:

1. Set/Affirm Expectations and Roles
2. Analyze and Use Data
3. Embed Benefits Planning and Education
4. Make Employment Part of the Plan
5. Develop and Increase Capacity for Employment Services and Supports
6. Build Early Work Experience for Youth

The best advice we heard is to jump in and start trying something; learn, build and adapt along the way.

### 1. Set/Affirm Expectations and Roles

Ready your staff to embrace new thinking and approaches. Studies show, most consumers are motivated to work, provided they perceive that the professionals helping them also embrace the belief in the importance of work and genuinely believe they can work.

#### Sample activities:

- Have new and current staff complete these four on-line training modules, “Integrating Employment and Benefits in Person Centered Planning”:
  1. [Introduction \(10:00\)](#)
  2. [Think Differently \(12:00\)](#)
  3. [Communicate Differently \(3:52\)](#)
  4. [Work Differently \(14:25\)](#)
- Have your staff assess your agency’s environment to support work with the [Supportive Environment Assessment](#). Use this information to develop a plan of action.
- Structure staff meetings to serve as a learning forum to share information with case managers about employment goals and planning as well as state and federal program and policy changes
- Hold people accountable to these new expectations. For example, review the details about participant’s services in their care plan, look for opportunities to expand employment and increase earned income.
- Have all staff (case managers, supervisors, case aides, managers) watch the **4 minute** video on the partners page (Set the Stage for Change) [Make Work Part of the Plan](#).
- Talk to you county cohorts about achieving higher results. Share examples with staff and providers.



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## 2. Analyze and Use Data – Set A Baseline & Measure Improvements

The DHS Earned Income Data Base is available as a resource. This information can help you understand the employment outcomes and other useful information helpful in reaching your county's Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) program administration goals. The data used in the waiver review process has been streamlined to provide individual earnings data as well as information about services, providers and the employer on record in your county. We want to work with you to develop strategies to increase the number of working people with disabilities in your community, and will provide technical assistance along the way.

### Sample activities:

- Get the DHS Earned Income Data Base and analyze it
  - Understand what data elements are tracked
  - Know what earned income measures are in the waiver review
- Understand the Employment Goals that are in Minnesota's Olmstead Plan
  - Increase the number of "direct hires" ; the employer directly hires the person
  - Decrease the number of people who work in a sheltered workshop
  - Increase the number of people who have an individual job vs. a work group or crew
- Decide who will be responsible to analyze the data and how you will use the data to help your county set goals
- Bring case managers, supervisors, and management together to share stories that show how employment fits into your data picture

## 3. Embed Benefits Planning and Education

Educate staff to become good messengers about the value of work and raise expectations. Living on benefits alone often means living in poverty. Utilize and promote DB101 as a tool to address benefits questions and myths. Remember DB101 can be used by people you serve, their families, and anyone involved in their planning.

### Sample activities:

- Introduce staff to DB101 by having them watch the [Welcome to DB101](#) video and the [Learn from Others](#) video.
- Ask staff to Bookmark [www.DB101.org](http://www.DB101.org) in their favorites and set up a *My DB101 Account* on the site.



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- Have staff watch the short [Benefits Videos](#) so they can learn more about Benefits and Work.
- Explore DB101's [Partner tab's](#) trainings, activities and resources. Embed activities into your work to help staff build their comfort in helping address fears and concerns around work.

## 4. Make Employment Part of the Plan

People benefit by being employed. Align what you do to support people working in the community. How can you help individuals understand the value of work, make good decisions about work, and assure employment goals are in everyone's plan when they say they want to work? Employment may be a solution to what is important to a person, make listening for this a key part of person centered planning.

### Sample activities:

- Use employment as a strategy to reach other goals – i.e. meet new friends, move to a different neighborhood, get a pet, etc.
- Use the flexibility of the Consumer-Directed Community Supports (CDCS) 20% budget exception to be creative supporting someone to working in competitive employment.
- MnCHOICES Assessment - review the employment module; are questions and goals addressed in service planning?
- Informed Choice – incorporate the informed choice framework and [toolkit](#) to support staff in holding engaging conversation with people and helping people explore and plan for work.
- Share success stories about people who are working; what happened in planning, and how it was supported. What can you learn from these successes?

## 5. Develop and Increase Capacity for Employment Services and Supports

Bring providers together to talk about best practices and how to increase employment goals in your community.

### Sample activities:

- Emphasize individualized employment and [“Best Practices”](#) for supporting work.
- Write a service agreement to fund Supported Employment 1:1 ratio.
- Collect and review employment data from providers; set goals together. We are a resource to help you get started working with providers towards better outcomes.



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## 6. Build Early Work Experience for Youth

Regardless of disability, early work experience is one of the most important indicators of adult work success. Expectations and relationships are the path to recognizing and creating opportunities for young people to get jobs.

### Sample activities:

- Encourage families to expect their child with a disability to share in family responsibilities and chores, (i.e. set and clear the table, cut the grass, shovel snow, etc.),
- Encourage families to look at their own family and friend networks for work experience opportunities for teenagers and young adults.
- Create work experiences that can lead to a job!

