



## **Components of Essential Employment Policy for New Hampshire's citizens with Disabilities:**

- **Prioritize** employment in a unified and coordinated effort across systems.
- **Maintain** Medicaid for Employed Adults with Disabilities (MEAD) as a NH Medicaid eligibility category and **Commit** to removing all disincentives to working.
- **Promote** independence and economic self-sufficiency.
- **Include** personal care and essential community based supports in NH Insurance Exchange benchmark coverage under the Affordable Care Act.
- **Support** effective school to work transition.
- **Ensure** access to user friendly and accessible work incentives information and counseling services.
- **Include** existing employment supports in any systemic change for long-term care.
- **Integrate** transportation planning as an essential aspect of employment services.
- **Value** and **Include** the input of people with disabilities in all statewide planning.
- **Continue to Engage** the business community regarding the benefits of employing people with disabilities.
- **Expand** availability of training programs within community colleges for individuals with significant disabilities

### **KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR EMPLOYMENT SUCH AS:**

- Increase in number and percent of people with disabilities working at or above minimum wage.
- Increase in hours worked.
- Benefits obtained.
- Increase in number of employers hiring workers with disabilities.

### **DEVELOPMENT OF A STATEWIDE REPORT CARD FOR EMPLOYMENT:**

- Comparison of New Hampshire employment data to comparable states.
- Comparison of employment data with previous years.
- Availability of post-secondary training programs for individuals with significant disabilities

### **GOALS FOR NEW HAMPSHIRE:**

- Within five years, New Hampshire will be one of the top five states nationally on the percent of people with disabilities who are employed
- Increase the number of businesses that hire people with disabilities.
- Increase in the number of young adults aged 18-26 who are employed.

## **BUILDING ON NEW HAMPSHIRE'S SUCCESSES:**

### ***Success through coordination and collaboration***

Strategies that are responsive to the needs of business are essential to achieving meaningful employment for people with disabilities.



### **Employment Leadership Awards**

The Employment Leadership Award began in 2009 and is presented annually to New Hampshire employers that demonstrate inclusive excellence in the hiring and retention of workers with disabilities in the competitive workforce. Nominations for the award are submitted by employment providers and evaluated based on the extent to which the company has helped to nurture the development of employee's skills, the adoption of inclusive practices, and the engagement of community partners to increase diversity in the workplace.

Twenty employers have been recognized to date.

### **Marketing Campaigns (WE ARE SUCCESS and [www.nhletsworktogether.org](http://www.nhletsworktogether.org)).**

The I AM SUCCESS and WE ARE SUCCESS marketing campaigns were designed to highlight the abilities of individuals with disabilities in the workplace as part of addressing the reluctance some employers feel about hiring workers with disabilities.

### **New Hampshire Let's Work Together**

This is the virtual face of the New Hampshire Employment Leadership Awards and a gateway for business and industry professionals to learn more about the efforts in New Hampshire to promote employment for individuals with disabilities. The site showcases Employment Leadership Award recipients and links employers to resource guides on hiring and retaining individuals with disabilities in the workforce.

### **Employment Specialist Training & Certification**

This is endorsed by NH Vocational Rehabilitation and the Bureau of Developmental Services.

Training infrastructure was expanded in the state in an effort to produce shared professional practices meeting national competencies for employment that would result in better employment outcomes and eliminate the burden of different training expectations for providers from each system, ie NHVR and BDS.

NH offers the Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE) Training that requires the completion of 40 hours of training. Trainees earn an ACRE Basic Employment Certificate which is a nationally recognized professional qualification. The curriculum is based on standards set by the national Association for Persons in Supported Employment (APSE) and prepares professionals for the APSE national certification exam.

In 2012, APSE launched a Certified Employment Support Professional Examination that designates job developers and employment professionals who pass the exam a nationally recognized credential as a Certified Employment Support Professional (CESP). The certification program helps to improve effectiveness, advancement and credibility of employment professionals. In December 2011, New Hampshire became the first state to sponsor the exam and was awarded the first CESP credentials in the country. Additionally, 70% of APSE graduates in New Hampshire completed the NH ACRE training prior to earning their certification.

### **Statewide and Regional Workforce Development Coalitions**

Workforce Development Coalitions are regional networking groups for local employment specialists and workforce development professionals serving individuals with disabilities and local businesses. Groups work to develop a coordinated approach to educating employers on inclusive hiring practices using the We Are Success and the Think Beyond the Label marketing campaigns, meet local employment specialist's training needs, and identify local workforce development needs. There are currently 7 coalitions statewide.

### **NH Forum on the Future**

The NH Forum on the Future brings together leaders from business, higher education, and public policy that are committed to ensuring a highly educated and well-trained workforce to sustain NH's economic prosperity. The State of NH through the Granite State Employment Project became a three-year sponsor of the NH Forum on the Future allowing opportunities to ensure individuals with disabilities are included in strategies and conversations about NH's workforce.

### **INNOVATIVE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT MODELS/EVIDENCE BASED PRACTICES:**

- **Project SEARCH.**  
Project Search is a school-to-work, workplace immersion for students with significant intellectual and physical disabilities in New Hampshire. The model incorporates classroom instruction, career exploration and one-on-one job training and support through partnerships developed between local hospitals, New Hampshire high schools, New Hampshire Vocational Rehabilitation and the Bureau of Developmental Services. A key criterion for acceptance into the program is the student's strong desire for competitive employment. Since 2008, 94 students have graduated from Project SEARCH and over 70 graduates are employed as a result of the training program, which is a 74% employment rate. There are 6 Project SEARCH sites including: St. Joseph's Hospital, Catholic Medical Center, Concord Hospital, Cheshire Medical Center, Dartmouth Hitchcock Hospital-Lebanon, and Portsmouth Regional Hospital.
- **Project STRIDE.**  
STRIDE is a customized 20-week internship program for adults with disabilities set at Lowell General Hospital and, new this year, Plymouth State University. Students learn skills and intern in various departments overseen by Sodexo Managers, including Environmental Services, Dining Services, Grounds and Maintenance, and more. As of September 2012, there are 13 graduates with 100% employment.
- **Evidence Based Supported Employment.**  
Evidence Based Supported Employment (EBSE) is defined as the provision of vocational supports to individuals following the Supported Employment Implementation Resource Kit developed by Dartmouth Medical School to ensure successful competitive employment in the community. It is the preferred and prioritized employment support strategy for individuals with significant psychiatric disabilities.

## TRANSITION:

- **RENEW.**

Rehabilitation for Empowerment, Natural Supports, Education and Work (RENEW) is a structured school to career transition planning and individualized wrap around process for youth with emotional and behavioral challenges. With support from the Granite State Employment Project and the Endowment for Health, RENEW has expanded to many of the Community Mental Health Centers statewide.

- **Statewide & Regional Communities of Practice.**

The purpose of the group is to share resources, expertise, and work on issues of common concern as they relate to interacting with the business community, professional development and providing quality employment services. Membership is broad with statewide representation from area agencies, mental health centers, NHVR, private employment provider agencies, and community rehabilitation providers. Many of the members who attend are also members of regionally established workforce development coalitions.

- **Family Centered Transition Process.**

Family Centered Transition Process (FCTP) is a transition service includes training sessions for parents, in-home person-centered planning sessions with students and families, and several months of ongoing support for career exploration and plan implementation. To date, 73.3% of students receiving FCTP have been involved in paid work since graduating from high school, with an average wage per hour of \$8.84, significantly better employment outcomes than those reported in national statistics for this population. In addition, 46.7% of participants have been involved in post-secondary education, about evenly divided between 2-year and 4-year college experiences

- **Annual statewide Transition Conference.**

The New Hampshire Transition Community of Practice coordinates an annual Transition Summit. It is the only statewide conference for training, collaboration, networking and information, focused on post-secondary outcomes for students. Conferences have been held for the last six years with attendance ranging from 150-250 people. Best practices are shared from partners across the state.

- **ACES (A Chance to Experience Success)**

ACES is a two-week summer program at Keene State College for students with learning disabilities or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Students live on the Keene State College campus for two weeks where they take part in classroom activities, interactive group discussions, on-site work experiences, dorm living, recreation, and outdoor activities as a means to explore their individual career paths and strategies for living independently. Students complete a portfolio to document their experiences and share with family, friends, teachers and counselors to use for future planning. Since its inception, 36 students were enrolled and 35 students completed the program.

- **Earn and Learn.**

The Earn & Learn Program provides an academic, life skills and employment experience for Manchester high school students with disabilities who have dropped out of school or are at risk of dropping out. Through the program students work individually and in groups to help them gain a better understanding of who they are as individuals, their learning style and provided assistance in indentifying what is meaningful in their lives with regard to their future. Students enrolled in the Earn & Learn program is 10 weeks, from 9 a.m.-12 p.m. Monday through Friday, and it combines academics, life skills and work experience. This program is provided by Granite State Independent

Living.

- **Publicly Sharing Outcome Data in a user-friendly format**

Transparency of information is essential for individuals with disabilities to make informed decisions about the providers they choose to work with; for systems to understand the effectiveness of programs and strive for continuous improvement; to eliminate duplication of services across systems; and to be used by legislators as part of their decision-making process.

- **Work Incentives Website: [www.nhwirc.org](http://www.nhwirc.org)**

The Work Incentive Resource Center (WIRC) is a virtual clearinghouse of public benefit and work incentive information available for use by individuals with disabilities, families, and professionals. Access to work incentives information is essential for understanding how earned wages can affect various benefits. In most situations, individuals are financially better off earning wages that supplement benefits. The site has four sections: myths and facts; resources and solutions, including information about income support programs, health insurance, and special savings programs; resources for professionals, and contact information. The site is Administered by the UNH-Institute on Disability in collaboration with Granite State Independent Living, the site is updated regularly with the latest information on training, program changes, and other newsworthy information.

- **Work Incentives Three Tier Training Model**

A three-tiered training model was developed to integrate public benefit and work incentive knowledge at varying levels. Tier 1 was designed as basic training on all of the public benefit programs that related to employment and earned income that was designed with families and individuals with disabilities in mind. Tier 2 training was designed as advanced training designed to help staff target particular outreach, work incentives and reporting responsibilities for their clients based on the issues at hand. Tier 3 consisted of GSIL subject matter experts that providing training, technical assistance and individualized counseling to persons requiring support and assistance above and beyond what was available through Tier 1 and Tier 2.

- **Cross System Employment Leadership Team**

The Granite State Employment Project (GSEP) has demonstrated the tremendous value in having a cross system employment leadership team that cultivates strong working partnerships and effectively leverages resources to advance employment statewide.