



Think Possible! - The Case for Competitive Integrated Employment Module 1 Transcript

Welcome to part one of Think Possible!, the employment webinar series for service coordinators in the Wisconsin Department of Health Services children's programs. This is the first in a series of three webinars designed to help service coordinators understand how to support youth and families along the path to achieving the goal of employment in the community.

As a service coordinator, you play a vital role in shaping the expectations families have for their children with disabilities. The conversations you have with families about employment can have a profound effect on the direction a family takes for the future of their child. This training series is designed to give you the building blocks to encourage families to dream and create a positive vision for their child's future.

In this module, you will learn about the Department of Health Services guiding principles for competitive integrated employment, including how and why they were developed. The learning objectives for this module include being able to:

- Understand the employment experiences of youth and families.
- List five components of competitive integrated employment, or CIE.
- Apply strategies to encourage families and youth to consider CIE.
- Identify behaviors that lead to CIE.
- Describe things you can do to increase CIE.

The Department of Health Services established a set of 10 Guiding Principles for Competitive Integrated Employment in 2017 to advance the goal of competitive integrated employment. These guiding principles build on the value of full inclusion of people with disabilities served in our long-term care programs. These principles are based on evidence-based practices that align with our vision for the future for people with disabilities in our communities. We recognize that each person's path toward competitive integrated employment involves a person-centered planning process that includes a variety of experiences to build toward successful jobs.

These guiding principles do not limit or impact the provision of allowable services in DHS's adult long-term care programs, including the provision of pre-vocational services compliant with home and community-based services (or HCBS). Instead, these principles will lead our state in providing services and supports that result in competitive integrated employment.

In this webinar you will learn about eight of the 10 guiding principles. The other two will be covered in the next two webinar modules.

Before we learn about the guiding principles, let's review the definition of competitive integrated employment, or CIE. CIE is defined in federal law and has five main components to its definition:

- The work being done is performed on a full-time or part-time basis.

- The person is compensated not less than the applicable state or local minimum wage law (or the customary wage), or if self-employment, yields income comparable to persons without disabilities doing similar tasks.
- The worker should be eligible for the level of benefits provided to other employees.
- The work should be at a location typically found in the community where the person with a disability interacts with other people who do not have disabilities and are not in a supervisory role.
- The job presents opportunities for advancement.

Next, we will go through some of the guiding principles, share some participant experiences, and provide strategies you can use in your work with youth and families.

The first guiding principle is “Everyone can work in a job if it is matched to their unique skills and interests, and they are provided with the right supports.”

There are a lot of myths and misperceptions about people with disabilities and work, especially for people with the most significant disabilities. People with significant disabilities can, and do, work in the community in a variety of ways, including part-time, customized positions and microenterprise ventures using paid supports and natural workplace supports. Next, please watch Adam Nodstad’s employment video. By learning about the successes of youth with disabilities in the workplace and sharing these with families, you play a vital role in helping families believe that employment is possible for their child.

Click on the screen to watch the video about Adam and his can recycling business.

The second guiding principle is “Competitive integrated employment is the first and preferred employment outcome for all working-age youth and adults.” This means we should strive to make competitive integrated employment a reality in the lives of all people we support.

Full inclusion, including as valued employees or business owners in our communities, is the natural next step in the evolution of public policy and civil rights of people with disabilities. This national agenda, known as Employment First, is advanced by federal laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, and the Home and Community-Based Services Final Settings Rule.

The Medford community is one of many communities across Wisconsin advancing Employment First practices for youth with disabilities. Click on the screen to watch the Medford Area School District’s Employment First video.

The third guiding principle is “Working creates a strong path toward better physical and mental health.” Several research studies show a strong association between employment and better physical and mental health. The research demonstrates a bi-directional relationship between health and employment, meaning for some people, good health leads to higher levels of employment, and employment leads to improvements in health and wellness. Even if health concerns present barriers to employment for youth, this research shows that you don’t have to wait for health to improve before engaging a family in employment planning, because employment could, in fact, be the pathway to improved health.

Guiding principle number four is “Work is a pathway out of poverty, reduces reliance on public benefits, and is cost effective.” Fear of losing benefits is one of the most common reasons why people with disabilities choose not to work. Benefit programs like Social Security Disability Insurance (or SSDI), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and Medicaid (MA) can be confusing, resulting in a lot of misinformation. Special provisions and protections are in place that help people with disabilities work and earn a living. These are called work incentives. Work incentive benefits specialists are available throughout Wisconsin to help people understand and navigate their benefits, so they can work and earn money.

Providing supports and services to individuals with disabilities to obtain and maintain employment in the community is cost effective. A study by Robert Cimera, conducted with 1,118 people with disabilities in Wisconsin, found that employment support costs for those working in sheltered workshops was an average of 33.7% higher than for their peers with the same level of disability who worked in integrated jobs. Likewise, a study of almost 10,000 individuals nationally found that annual costs for sheltered workshop services averaged \$7,894.63 per person per year compared to just \$4,542.65 for individuals with the same disability levels in integrated jobs.

According to the Wisconsin Rehabilitation Council report of 2016, Wisconsin receives an impressive return on investment when a person with a disability joins our state’s workforce. In federal fiscal year 2016, the Department of Workforce Development Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (or DVR) invested \$38.8 million in the 4,615 DVR consumers who were successful in reaching their employment goal. The estimated annual earnings for that group was more than \$82.3 million.

Guiding principle number five is “Students with disabilities who have the supports to participate in general education classes and activities and take some type of postsecondary courses are more likely to obtain competitive integrated employment, require fewer supports, and earn higher wages.” Students with disabilities should be afforded the same opportunities as their peers without disabilities. Through inclusive experiences, youth learn about themselves and others, develop relationships, and build soft skills for employment.

Guiding principle number six is “When a child’s parents, teachers, and other adults in their life expect that the child or teenager will work, they are up to five times more likely to work in the community as an adult.” When youth have inclusive opportunities, families, teachers, and the youth themselves have higher expectations in life, which is a primary predictor of future success with employment.

Click on the screen to learn about Ben’s transition story.

Guiding principle number seven is “Having two or more paid community work experiences during high school means teens are five times more likely to work in the community after high school.” Like their peers without disabilities, youth with disabilities should be encouraged and supported to engage in part-time work during the high school years. Families can work with high school staff to build work skills and obtain work experiences. Research shows the longer a young person with a disability is out of school and not working, the more difficult it is for them to gain employment.

Guiding principle number 10 is “Society as a whole and businesses in all sectors of the economy can benefit from a workforce that includes, and actively engages, people with disabilities.”

Successful businesses know that hiring people with disabilities improves their bottom line. Not only do people with disabilities diversify the workplace and improve the company image, research shows employees with disabilities are reliable, committed workers. The turnover for employees with disabilities is 8% in comparison to 45% for other workers. Employers are beginning to recognize that people with disabilities are an under-tapped labor pool. Of non-employed, working-age people with disabilities, 80% want to work. The research also shows that people with disabilities have nearly identical job performance ratings as other workers.

Click on the screen to watch a public service announcement that was created by youth with disabilities and local businesses in Holmen, Wisconsin.

Thank you for viewing part one in the Think Possible! training series, The Case for Competitive Integrated Employment. Some key takeaways to keep in mind as you start engaging children, youth, and families in discussions about their hopes and dreams for the future include:

- Competitive integrated employment is the preferred employment outcome for all working-age youth and adults.
- Maintaining high expectations that children and youth will work leads to them being five times more likely to work in the community as an adult.
- Being supported to participate in general education classes and activities and some post-secondary classes can lead to youth being employed in the community, needing fewer supports, and earning higher wages.

In the next two modules you will learn about the two remaining guiding principles, strategies for engaging families, and planning employment throughout the childhood and teen years, as well as the roles of important partners and resources to include in the transition from school to employment.