

Employment First: Examining the Soft Bigotry of Low Expectations

Age & Disabilities Odyssey 2019

Employment First: Examining the Soft Bigotry of Low Expectations

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Introductions

Consider for a moment: What were you raised to think about work?

Then, we'll go around and share:

- Your name
- Your agency/organization
- Your role
- Your answer to the above

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- Employment First is a “critical priority” for the federal government
- Minnesota is an Employment First state
- Dakota County Community Living Services has adopted Employment First
- What about your agency/organization?

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Minnesota Employment First Policy Statement:

- Raising the **expectation**
- that **all** working age Minnesotans with disabilities
- **can work,**
- **want to work,** and
- **can achieve competitive integrated employment;**

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Minnesota Employment First Policy Statement
(continued):

And

- **each person will be offered the opportunity to work and earn a competitive wage**
 - *before being offered other supports and services.*

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Minnesota Definition of Competitive & Integrated Employment:

- Full-time, part-time, or self-employment with and without **support**
- In the **competitive** labor force
- On the **payroll** of a competitive business or industry

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Minnesota Definition of Competitive & Integrated Employment (continued):

- Pays **at least minimum wage**, but not less than the customary wage and level of benefits paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by workers without a disability
- With full physical, functional, and social **integration** in workplace

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Minnesota Guiding Principles—What would success look like?

1. Integrated, competitive employment is the first and expected service option.
2. Employment is prioritized as an outcome of services and supports.
3. Employment and support services are grounded in informed choice practices.

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A person has **Informed Choice** when he or she:

- Does not have options limited.
- Has had community exploration and experiences.
- Understands all options.
- Knows the potential risks and benefits of decisions.
- Has access to supports necessary to mitigate risks and overcome barriers.
- ...has all of this documented by his/her/their case manager!

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Minnesota Guiding Principles—What would success look like (continued)?

4. Individuals with disabilities have increased control and direction over services and supports.

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How is our system doing?

- 4. Individuals with disabilities have increased control and direction over services and supports.
- 3. Employment and support services are grounded in informed choice practices.
- 2. Employment is prioritized as an outcome of services and supports.
- 1. Integrated, competitive employment is the first and expected service option.

How is your agency/organization doing?

How are you doing?

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Activity#1: Examining My Employment First Beliefs

Voting instructions—get out your smart phones, tablets, or laptops!

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Activity #1: Examining My Employment First Beliefs

1. I believe that **all** working age Minnesotans with disabilities **can work**.

Yes, absolutely	Probably	Maybe, with a lot of support	I kind of doubt it	I just can't imagine it
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Activity #1: Examining My Employment First Beliefs

2. I believe **all** working age Minnesotans with disabilities **want to work**.

Yes, absolutely	Probably	Maybe, with a lot of support	I kind of doubt it	I just can't imagine it
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Activity #1: Examining My Employment First Beliefs

3. I believe **all** working age Minnesotans with disabilities **can achieve competitive integrated employment.**

Yes, absolutely	Probably	Maybe, with a lot of support	I kind of doubt it	I just can't imagine it
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Activity #1: Examining My Employment First Beliefs

4. I believe **each person** should be offered the opportunity to work and earn a competitive wage **before** being offered other support and services.

Yes, absolutely	Probably	Maybe, with a lot of support	I kind of doubt it	I just can't imagine it
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Activity #1: Examining My Employment First Beliefs

5. I believe **all** individuals with disabilities should be **fully integrated physically, functionally, and socially** within the workplace.

Yes, absolutely	Probably	Maybe, with a lot of support	I kind of doubt it	I just can't imagine it
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Activity #1: Examining My Employment First Beliefs

6. I believe employment should be **prioritized as an outcome of the services and supports** provided through a person's community support plan.

Yes, absolutely	Probably	Maybe, with a lot of support	I kind of doubt it	I just can't imagine it
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Activity #1: Examining My Employment First Beliefs

7. I believe **all** individuals with disabilities should **have control and direction** over services and supports.

Yes, absolutely	Probably	Maybe, with a lot of support	I kind of doubt it	I just can't imagine it
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Discussion on Activity #1: Examining My Employment First Beliefs

- Did you surprise yourself or learn something new about your beliefs?
- Was this difficult or uncomfortable? Why?

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I'd like us to consider that
anything less than

“Yes, absolutely”

on the Belief Questions might
be bias.

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Bias is thinking without thinking,
and it is an indication of a
functioning human brain.

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Humans exist in systems: our unconscious mind is largely a product of our history and our environment.

Sometimes our unconscious mind sorts information wrong.

Sometimes that wrong sort is reinforced by our system, amplified into systemic bias, and normalized.

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Sometimes our conscious minds know something our unconscious minds don't know.

Our conscious minds can look for these wrong-sort patterns, try to weaken them, and/or be intentional about setting them aside and acting against them.

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Activity #2: Further Examination of Beliefs

Think of a the people you work with and consider this statement for each individual, one-at-a-time.

**I BELIEVE YOU CAN ACHIEVE COMPETITIVE
INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT.**

Yes, absolutely	Probably	Maybe, with a lot of support	I kind of doubt it	I just can't imagine it
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Activity #2: Further Examination of Beliefs

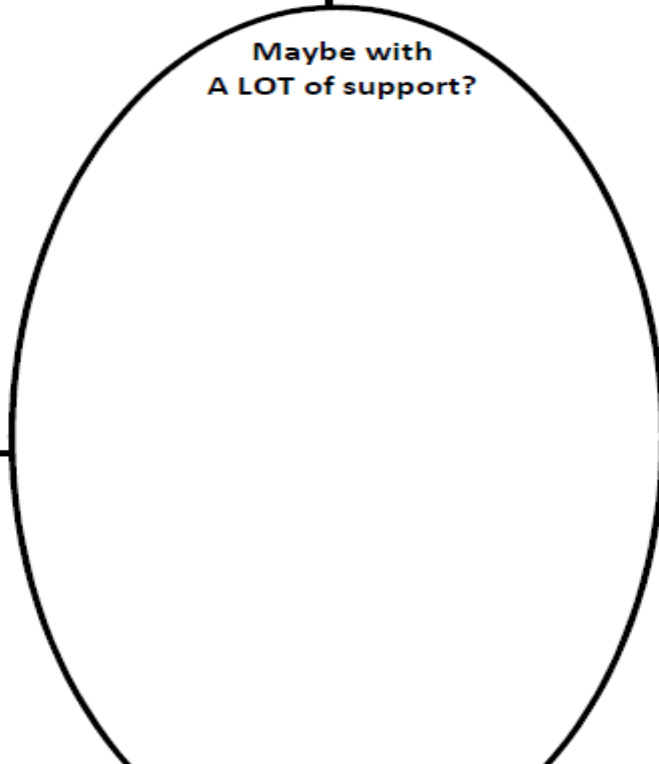
Yes, absolutely!

Probably

Maybe with
A LOT of support?

I kind of doubt it

I just cannot imagine it



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Discussion on Activity #2: Further Examination of Beliefs

- What is common about people you've grouped together?
- Challenge your conscious mind to move each person closer to the "Absolutely yes!" group. How would your support plans look different for each person if they were in the "Absolutely yes!" group?
- Did you learn something about your beliefs and biases?

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This is not our first rodeo...

- Range of responses
- What they mean
- Why they are important

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Exceptions to “All”:

- People who are certified disabled?
- People with transportation barriers?
- People who lack motivation?
- People with felonies?
- People with severe or profound developmental disability?
- People who are medically complex?
- People with severe brain injury?

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Activity #3: Beliefs Into Actions

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Activity #3: Beliefs Into Actions

1. I ensure that every person has control and direction over services and supports.

Always	Most of the time	Some of the time	Rarely	Never
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Activity #3: Beliefs Into Actions

2. I offer each person the opportunity to work and earn a competitive wage before offering other supports and services.

Always	Most of the time	Some of the time	Rarely	Never
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Activity #3: Beliefs Into Actions

3. I prioritize employment as a goal of the services and supports provided through a person's community support plan.

Always	Most of the time	Some of the time	Rarely	Never
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Discussion on Activity #3: Beliefs Into Actions

- Do your actions match your beliefs?
- Where did your biases show up?
- How does our system reinforce your biases?
- Do your biases also reinforce our system?
- What can you do to live your beliefs in spite of that system?

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An example:

my beliefs,

my biases,

how that showed up in my work,

what I'm doing about it,

and why it's important.

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Bob's Story

- Personal and professional background
- A fateful day in the Pacific
- Responsibility to savage gifts
- Not just my story: disability is normative

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The State of Our Union

- History
- Paradigms
- Methods
- “The fierce urgency of the now”

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Thank you!

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