

Interagency Employment Panel
Update on Activities and Recommendations
January 2015

What is the Interagency Employment Panel?

The Interagency Employment Panel is the interagency leadership group formed to align policies and funding to meet the state's Olmstead Plan employment goals and Minnesota's Employment First Policy. Representatives from the Minnesota Departments of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), Human Services (DHS), and Education (MDE) are appointed by the Commissioners of their Departments.

Who is on the Panel?

Alex Bartolic	Director, Disability Services, DHS
Carol Pankow	Director, State Services for the Blind, DEED
Julie Pearson	Clinical Services Policy Supervisor, Adult Mental Health Division, DHS
Kimberley T. Peck	Director, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, DEED
Robyn Widley	Supervisor, Interagency Partnerships Unit, Special Education Division, MDE
Christina Schaffer	Case Processing Enforcement Officer, Minnesota Department of Human Rights, MDHR
Joan Willshire	Director, Minnesota State Council on Disability

Annual reporting

The Interagency Employment Panel will produce annual reports outlining their work from the previous year. These reports will contain information such as findings, policy interpretations and recommendations. This is the first annual report. The first year was truncated as the Panel was not formed until May 2014, nonetheless, the work accomplished through the first seven months will set the ground for more accomplishments in the future.

Findings

The Panel reviewed input and recommendations related to employment of people with disabilities gathered over a number of years, back to 2007. Beginning in 2007, there were several employment "summits" that targeted different groups from all stakeholders to business leaders, families, and individuals with disabilities. In 2009 and 2010 there were a series of listening sessions held with different disability populations: deaf/blind, brain injury, mental illness, physical disabilities, blind, intellectual and developmental disabilities, Autism Spectrum Disorder and transition age youth. In 2009 and 2010 there were meetings of employment community action teams. There were conferences on disability and employment in 2009, 2010, and 2012. In 2010 and 2011 learnings were recorded from meetings of Community Action Teams. In 2013, the Olmstead Plan community input process consisted of many opportunities for commentary.

Findings can be found at the following websites:

- From the employment summits: [Minnesota Association of People Supporting Employment First \(MNAPE\)](http://www.mnapse.org/employment-first/#!action/c1ulz) (see Summit documents)¹

¹ <http://www.mnapse.org/employment-first/#!action/c1ulz>

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- From listening sessions: [Minnesota Employment Policy Initiative final recommendations](#) (see “MEPI Final Report”, 2-page Summary of Recommendations)²
- From the Disability and Employment Conferences: [Minnesota Employment Training and Technical Assistance Center](#) (see “Annual Disability and Employment Conference”)³
- From Community Action Team gatherings: [Minnesota Employment Training and Technical Assistance Center](#) (see “Community Action Teams”)⁴
- From Olmstead Plan community input: [Minnesota Olmstead Plan website](#), document “Where People Work” (see “Other Documents” section)⁵

Policy Interpretation

The Panel did not have any formal policy “interpretations” in its first year. However, the hallmark of the first year was developing and adopting an Employment First Policy.

The Panel members worked in consultation with the Employment Learning Community, Minnesota’s Employment First Coalition, and the Olmstead Implementation Office to guide the development of Minnesota’s Employment First Policy. The Panel reviewed and revised the final draft of the Employment First Policy and presented it to the Olmstead Subcabinet. The Subcabinet adopted the Minnesota Employment First Policy on September 29, 2014.

The Employment First Policy guiding principles are:

- Integrated, competitive employment is the first and expected service option
- Employment is prioritized as an outcome of services and supports
- Employment and support services are grounded in informed choice practices, which include but are not limited to:
 - Community-based experiences on which to base decisions
 - Knowledge about the potential impact of employment on one’s quality of life
 - Information and support to understand one’s options related to employment
 - Understanding of how earned income affects public benefits and resources so that work can be part of the plan without fear of losing essential benefits
- Individuals with disabilities have increased control and direction over services and supports
- Effective interagency coordination will be demonstrated in the delivery of innovative employment, education, and support services, and improved employment outcomes
- State agencies will be accountable for monitoring and reporting progress and for establishing interagency quality assurance procedures

² <http://www.mn-epi.org/reports/index.asp>

³ <http://www.mntat.org/conference/conference10.asp>

⁴ <http://mntat.org/sites/index.asp>

⁵ http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET_DYNAMIC_CONVERSION&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&dDocName=opc_archive

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Recommendations

Services

- Implement rule changes for extended employment

Status: Interagency work group is meeting; legislation has been introduced; hearings will occur in the 2015 Legislative Session

- Reform pre-vocational, day training and habilitation, and supported employment services to encourage, incent, reward and support competitive employment outcomes for people with disabilities

Status: DHS Disability Services Division is revising and developing employment services across all the disability waivers to include employment exploration, employment development and supported employment. These new services will be a part of a waiver amendment that is targeted to be sent to the federal Medicaid agency, the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) by October 15, 2015 (pending Olmstead Plan modification changes date to October 31, 2015). The payment for these services will be established, and will establish outcome incentives for competitive employment outcomes.

Standards

- All people will have the choice to attain competitive employment as defined in the Minnesota Olmstead Plan

Status: Designing plan for implementation of the Employment First Policy; integrating employment planning into person-centered thinking and person-centered planning training; online training modules related to competitive employment are available

- All people will be able to make informed choices about all the services available to them, including competitive employment

Status: Designing plan for implementation of the Employment First Policy; designed new employment exploration waiver service that will provide payment for experiential options to learn about employment and help people make informed decisions

- People will use a variance process to opt out of competitive employment

Status: Designing plan for implementation of the Employment First Policy

- People will be given the opportunity to make informed choices about competitive employment on a regular basis

Status: Will be a part of the operationalization for the Employment First Policy

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Funding

- Extended employment

Status: Additional dollars are under consideration in 2015 legislative session

- Waiver funding

Status: Counties are working with providers and families to identify opportunities to increase supported employment services; waiver amendment will revise employment services and payment structure for them, including outcome payments

- Consumer Directed Community Supports

Status: Completed analysis and developed pilot and policy recommendations for future legislation

Coordination

- Compliance with federal funding changes: home and community-based services final rule and Workforce Innovations Opportunity Act

Status: Have studied the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act that was passed by Congress and signed by President Obama on July 22, 2014 and the new home and community-based services rule issued by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services in March 2014. The Act affects transition age youth. The CMS rule affects all home and community-based services funded by Medicaid. The Act and the home and community-based services rule will have a major impact on the content and focus of the Memorandums of Agreement/Memorandums of Understanding that the Panel will develop in 2015.

- Increase competitive employment outcomes for students with disabilities within one year of graduation

Status: During the spring of 2014, an Employment Community of Practice (E-COP) was formed. The E-COP is a partnership activity between MDE, DEED, DHS and representatives from advocacy groups, community rehabilitation providers and twelve local education agencies. They agreed to work and learn together over a one to two year period of time to develop and share knowledge of specific strategies to increase the number of students with disabilities who within one year of graduating from high school are competitively employed

- Increase utilization of evidence-based practices that support competitive employment outcomes in local education agencies

Status: During the 2014-2015 school years, the E-COP teams are being introduced to evidence-based practices such as Guideposts for Success, Career Planning, and strategies to increase paid job experiences prior to graduation. The E-COP teams are working in collaboration with DHS and DEED in promote Disability 101 estimator sessions. As a result of collaboration between

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DEED, DHS, MDE and advocacy groups, families of students with disabilities contributed to the development of the new Work-Benefits-Youth materials. Materials can be reviewed in the [Youth section of Disability Benefits 101](#)⁶. The E-COP teams will continue to receive technical assistance from DEED, DHS and MDE and advocacy organizations through the 2015-2016 school years.

Implementation plans developed

The Panel recommended three legislative priorities to increase access to services and increase integrated employment.

- Secure funding for inter-agency competitive employment and community supports project for transition age youth and young adults (ages 14-26) with complex and significant disabilities
- Secure funding for employment data collection strategy to design, develop and implement a comprehensive statewide interagency data base for collecting and reporting on employment outcomes for students and adults with disabilities under the Olmstead Plan
- Secure funding for technical assistance and training to providers to help change business models related to employment

What's next?

Minnesota has prioritized three areas to work on in the next year: increasing the number of people getting competitive, integrated jobs by implementing the informed choice mandates of Minnesota's Employment First policy, facilitating the movement of adults into integrated, competitive employment and expanding the numbers of transition age youth who achieve competitive, integrated employment under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity act (WIOA).

Action steps for the next year include:

- Complete planning and begin implementation of Employment First Policy
- Developing interagency Memorandums of Agreement/Memorandums of Understanding across DHS, DEED, MDE, and MDHR to support alignment, funding and coordination to meet integration and employment goals
- Seek opportunities to move priority areas forward, regardless of 2015 legislative outcomes

⁶ <http://www.workbenefitsyouth.org/>