



Build Capacity to Provide Equitable and Culturally Responsive Services for Individuals Across Their Lifespan – Employment First and High School Transition

King County
Board for Developmental Disabilities

Updated November 19, 2019

Action Request

Protect Washington’s Employment First Policy and maintain employment funding. Ensure all students leaving high school in 2019-2021 who are eligible for DDA services are added to the Basic Plus Waiver in order to receive employment and other needed supports.

Washington is a National Leader in Employment First Policy

In 2006, Washington State enacted the Working Age Adult Policy which prioritized employment services for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). This Employment First Policy was among the first of its kind in the nation and paved the way for multiple other states to follow per the 2019 Case for Inclusion Report¹. Per the report, Washington State saw an 81 percent increase in the number of individuals with I/DD working for pay from 2007 – 2018.

High School Transition Age is a Critical Period for Individuals with I/DD

Individuals with I/DD who leave school with a job are much more likely to remain employed and be included in community life. Those who do not get a job within six months of leaving school may lose learned skills, including those that lead to gainful employment. These individuals may be at risk for becoming isolated without connections in the community.

Benefits of Employment Services

Historically, many people with I/DD have been unemployed or underemployed despite their ability, desire, and willingness to work. Employment services help people with I/DD find and keep competitive jobs in the community that align with their preferences, interests and strengths. This promotes financial stability and independence. Employment services also promote community inclusion and personal well-being because of increased social connections and opportunities to engage with and contribute to the community.

¹https://caseforinclusion.org/application/files/5715/5534/1836/UCP_Case_for_Inclusion_Report_2019_Final_Single_Page_041519.pdf (pages 28-31).

A National Leader: King County’s S2W Program

The King County School to Work (S2W) program supports high school transition age individuals in obtaining and maintaining employment through its nationally recognized best practices model. S2W is a partnership between King County, Washington State’s Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Developmental Disabilities Administration, school districts, job support agencies, and students and families.

The average job placement rate for individuals exiting the King County S2W program is nearly 60 percent. This outcome exceeds placement rates for young adults with I/DD elsewhere in the nation.²

Strong Legislative Support

The Legislature has maintained a strong commitment to high school transition services and has appropriated funding for students with I/DD over the past 25 years.

Sustain the Gain from Special Education

High school transition students need opportunities to move into the workforce. We must leverage our investment in special education and ensure students with I/DD can access employment services in order to establish independence, create a new generation of taxpayers, and reduce dependency on other long-term government supports.

Ensure access to the Basic Plus Medicaid Waiver Program to provide employment services for all DDA eligible students exiting high school in the 2019-2021 biennium.

² State Data: The National Report on Employment Services and Outcomes – 2016