



# Arizona Employment First Policy Statement



## Background

An Executive Order was signed by Governor Doug Ducey in November 2017 stating that Arizona is an Employment First State. This Executive Order declared that all State Agencies that provide services and support to persons who have disabilities shall implement competitive integrated employment as the preferred outcome (“Employment First”) in the provision of publicly funded services for all working age citizens who have disabilities, regardless of level of disability.

## Policy Framework

1. Arizona’s State Agencies and their affiliates have several stated goals to address disability, education and employment. Among the goals are:
  - a. Empowering Arizonans with disabilities to lead self-directed, healthy and meaningful lives; and,
  - b. In the development of service plans and service delivery, assistance and supports for individual, integrated employment will be prioritized
    - i. Public resources used to assist and support individuals with disabilities should be shifted from facility-based into the community
  - c. All state agencies will share data and information across systems in order to better track outcome and success
2. It is critical for Arizona that working age adults, including individuals with disabilities:
  - a. Become as self-sufficient as possible through decreased reliance on public benefits;
  - b. Become part of the workforce; and
  - c. Contribute to the economy
3. Individuals with disabilities have a right to the opportunity for meaningful work and:
  - a. Many individuals want to pursue employment opportunities; and
  - b. Meaningful work can be accomplished regardless of disability; and
  - c. All real or perceived barriers to employment (transportation, assistive technology, benefits/income planning, workplace accommodations, housing, etc.) can be overcome through partnerships, resourcefulness and a strong vision
4. The benefits of meaningful work are significant and valuable to all working age adults, including individuals with disabilities. Among the benefits are:
  - a. Ability to earn and keep wages;
  - b. Develop and expand relationships;
  - c. Integrate into one’s community in a meaningful way; and
  - d. Pursue personal employment goals and dreams

## **Policy Implementation**

In implementing this policy, the preferred outcome/expectation is “competitive integrated employment.”

**Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE):** For the purposes of this policy statement “competitive integrated employment” is defined according to the following criteria:

- The individual is hired and paid directly by the employer
- Employment takes place in a work place in the community, where the majority of individuals do not have disabilities, and provides ongoing opportunities to interact with non-disabled individuals to the same extent that individuals employed in comparable positions would interact
- The position is an individual job (not a group or enclave setting)
- Customized approaches and individualized supports are provided for employment success.
- How many hours worked a week is based on individual choice, wants and needs
- Wages and hours are comparable to employees in the same or similar position
  - Minimum or competitive wages and benefits
  - Opportunities for advancement that are similar to those for other employees who are not individuals with disabilities
- If self-employed, yields income that is comparable to others without disabilities in the general population

## **Conclusion**

Employment has a clear benefit in terms of income and economic independence. Additionally, employment is a primary means to increase community integration and participation, as well as building meaningful relationships. The societal benefit of increasing employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities is immeasurable; creating greater understanding and acceptance of the wide range of capabilities of all individuals as co-workers, fellow community members, peers and friends.