

Employment Talking Points

December 2011

The following talking points can be used by Case Managers, Transition Coordinators, Educational Liaisons, Resource Managers and others when preparing to talk with individuals, families, private providers, educators, officials and the public.

Why now?

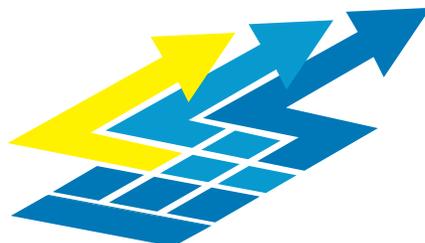
- With one of the worst economies in years, federal, state and local budgets are being cut with the possibility of services being drastically reduced. We must invest now in assisting people to figure out how to earn incomes to mitigate this potential loss in services.
- A paycheck helps reduce reliance upon other sources of support and insures greater financial security and stability in uncertain fiscal times.
- If not now, when? By investing now, we will be better positioned to benefit from any future economic upturn.

Employment is a paid job in the community that a person wants and can perform with (or without) accommodation and support.

- Wages are at least minimum wage with a goal of earning a living wage
- The job provides a valuable service to the employer and/or community and a valuable role for the employee.
- The job matches a person's abilities, career goals and aspirations.
- The job may be in a variety of typical work settings such as a retail business, hospital, factory or the person's own business.
- Accommodations and support may be planned and/or provided by the community business, the support provider, and/or co-workers and other natural supports

Employment and income mean a lifestyle with value, choice and empowerment.

- Paid work is an essential part of a valued and full life for adults who are of working age. It is part of the way we all define ourselves.
- When a person has a paycheck and the opportunity to use his or her own money, it maximizes self-determination, choice, control and independence.
- Jobs build competence with opportunities to maintain skills and learn new ones
- Working in the community offers opportunities for new experiences and personal growth in many areas including the opportunity to learn from others



DDS Employment First Initiative
Real Work for Real Pay

- Working and a paycheck expands integration and relationships in the physical and social life of a community
- Community work sites are safe places to be and can be accommodated if needed at little to no cost.
- Individuals have choices in the type of jobs they obtain and in the providers who support them on a path to employment
- Employment is a basic human right (Article 23 of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights)
- Employment gives individuals the opportunity to become contributing members of their communities and the opportunity to be viewed as having a more valued social role.

People with developmental disabilities are successful workers in today's workforce.

- Individuals with disabilities in the labor force have a positive financial impact on our economy generating income that it ultimately returned in the form of tax revenues and purchase of goods and services in local communities]
- More complex jobs are possible thanks to new technologies, laws, and systematic teaching methods
- Due to changes in state and federal laws, people with disabilities do not have to limit work hours or earning in order to maintain essential health and other benefits
- Qualified job coaches and job developers can: 1.) assist people to choose, get, learn and keep a job of their choice and 2.) provide support to employers to attain and maintain quality employees
- There are many stories and examples of success in employment in a variety of formats such as the Employment Idol video to share with individuals with disabilities, their families and employers.

Employment First is an Initiative and Policy of the State Department of Developmental Services of Connecticut

- » Employment First is about raising expectations of all stake holders that people, regardless of their barriers to employment, must be given the opportunity to work
- » The State is leading this initiative through:
 1. the development and issuance of a new Employment First Policy
 2. support for training activities for staff, private providers, individuals with disabilities and their families
 3. the requirement that all private and public providers include employment first goals in their annual Continuous Quality Improvement Plans
 4. the funding of additional employment activities such as career planning and working interviews
- » Each individual will be supported on a path to employment to pursue a career matched to his or her interests, talents and desires
- » Case Managers will have an annual conversation with individuals about employment and career planning