

Employment First (E1st) in Iowa

Vision:

The State of Iowa's vision of employment for all is "Employment in the general workforce is the first priority and the expected and preferred outcome in the provision of publicly funded services for all working age Iowans with disabilities." (Governor's Office, 2012).

This means jobs where individuals earn at least minimum wage, receive benefits, and work alongside people with and without disabilities.

What is Employment First (E1st)?

E1st is the belief that **everyone** can work and be involved in their community, regardless of disability. Public E1st systems rely on services that promote community integrated employment (CIE) as the **first** choice for people with significant disabilities

Everyone, even people with significant disabilities, can and should have the opportunity to work in their community and take part in community life. "Community employment" means jobs that are:

- an individual job
- paid by the employer
- in a normal job setting
- integrated with the regular workforce
- using natural supports (plus provider supports if needed)

Employment 1st initiatives and policies support competitive integrated employment as the expected standard and define the term as:

1. **Competitive:** work that is paid at or above minimum wage and not less than the customary wage and level of benefits paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by employees who are not disabled.
2. **Integrated:** work in the community, where the employee interacts with other persons who are not disabled to the same extent as others who are in comparable positions, and that presents opportunities for advancement that are similar for those who are not disabled.
3. **Employment:** work, including self-employment, that allows a person to live self-sufficiently, independently, and with dignity.



Employment Services and Support

Iowa HHS participates in initiatives to help people with disabilities get jobs in their communities. Most people with disabilities want to work. E1st recognizes that working:

- is a typical adult role.
- is an essential part of health and wellbeing
- helps people with self esteem, symptom control, fewer hospitalizations
- is a cost-effective alternative to day treatment
- helps people use their talents and build a career

Iowa HHS will continue applying for federal opportunities to help us implement E1st especially for students and adults with disabilities to participate fully in their communities.

Iowa Partners Collaborating on E1st Projects

E1st is a collaborative effort involving:

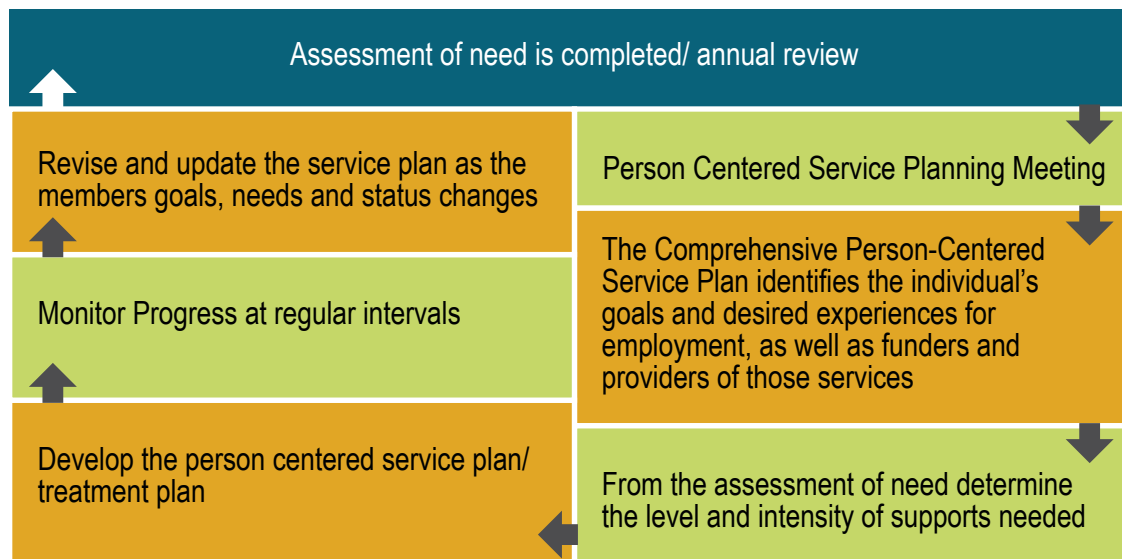
- People with disabilities and their families
- Service providers and business leaders
- State agencies: [Iowa Health and Human Services](#), [Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services](#), [Iowa Workforce Development](#), [Iowa Department for the Blind](#), [Iowa Department of Education](#)
- Advocacy and advisory groups: [Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council](#), [Olmstead Consumer Task Force](#), [Disability Rights Iowa](#), [Iowa Association of Community Providers](#)
- Academic partners: [Iowa's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities](#), [Iowa's Center of Excellence for Behavioral Health](#)
- Managed Care Organizations

Together, these partners are working to make employment the norm (not the exception) for Iowans with disabilities.

How Do I Get Supported Employment Services?

Community agencies contracted with Iowa HHS deliver employment services to Medicaid members with disabilities who are eligible for a long term services and support (LTSS) Waiver which includes employment, or members eligible for state-plan Habilitation. The member can ask their case manager or care coordinator how to get employment services, or bring it up at their annual person-centered-planning meeting.

HCBS Service Planning Cycle



The array of employment services are described below.

Overview

Iowa's system of LTSS employment supports



Since these are Medicaid-funded services and supports, you can find their descriptions on the [HHS Medicaid pages](#), or in [this "Overview of HCBS Funded Employment Services presentation"](#).

National Partnerships and Initiatives

HHS has also participated in several federal initiatives that support E1st goals, including collaborations with:

- [Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services \(CMS\)](#)
- [Administration for Community Living \(ACL\)](#)
- [National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services \(NASDDDS\)](#)
- [National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors \(NASMHPD\)](#)
- [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#)
- [U.S. Department of Labor - Office of Disability Employment Policy \(ODEP\)](#)
- [Job Accommodation Network](#)

Key Projects since 2009:

- [National Expansion of Employment Opportunities Network \(NEON\)](#)
- [Advancing State Policy Integration for Recovery and Employment \(ASPIRE\)](#)
- [Visionary Opportunities to Increase Competitive Employment \(VOICE\)](#)
- [Employment First State Leadership Mentor Project \(EFSLMP\)](#)
- [Partnership in Integrated Employment \(PIE\) / Iowa Coalition for Integration and Employment \(ICIE\)](#)
- [Employment Development Initiative \(EDI\)](#)
- [State Employment Leadership Network \(SELN\)](#)
- [Medicaid Infrastructure Grant \(MIG\)](#)