



# New Jersey State Employment and Training Commission

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Dennis M. Bone, *Chairman*

Chris Christie, *Governor*

## **POLICY RESOLUTION: SETC #2016-06**

**SUBJECT:** New Jersey's Definition for Employment First

### **Purpose**

In April 2012, Governor Chris Christie declared that New Jersey would become the 14th *Employment First* state in the United States. According to the United States Department of Labor's, Office of Disability Employment Policy; *Employment First* means that competitive employment is the first and preferred post-education activity for everyone, including individuals with the most significant disabilities. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires states and their LWDBs to invest prescribed resources to promote the creation and implementation of workforce development and training programs and services designed specifically for individuals with significant disabilities. A unified *Employment First* Definition for New Jersey would ensure the public workforce system has a singular focus and vision that ensures all workforce development/training resources dedicated for individuals with disabilities, including individuals with the most significant disabilities, have the potential for yielding the highest return on investment.

### **Background**

*Employment First*, a framework for systems change that is centered on the premise that all citizens with disabilities, including individuals with the most significant disabilities, are capable of full participation in integrated employment and community life. Individuals with disabilities are a multi-skilled workforce resource for employers. An inclusive workplace promotes diversity, expands the tax base and creates an expanded pool of qualified candidates for available jobs. 'Employment First' is about creating an environment for individuals with disabilities, including individuals with the most significant disabilities, that empowers them with choices for their future, reduces poverty, shrinks enrollment in entitlement programs, eases demand on state and community based social service agencies and provides workers with a sense of achievement.

### **Employment First Definition**

Competitive integrated employment will be seen as the first and primary option for all individuals with disabilities, including individuals with the most significant intellectual and developmental disabilities (ID/DD), who apply through informed choice for workforce services.

**RESOLUTION: The State Employment and Training Commission hereby resolves that the State of New Jersey and its local area requests for defining *Employment First* for New Jersey, as identified above, be reviewed and approved or denied, as defined in this policy.**

**Commission Approved: January 19, 2016**