



of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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## **Ideas for DHS to improve integrated employment outcomes for youth with disabilities**

- **Adopt and implement a clear DHS statewide policy on employment.**

Research demonstrates that “high performing states” have adopted policies that prioritize integrated jobs as the most desired outcome. These policies are clearly associated with transition practices and resource investment that lead to integrated employment outcomes at substantial levels, and can include:

  - Setting targets for constant, demonstrable improvement in integrated employment rates for youth.
  - Ending all new entries to facility-based employment for youth exiting high school; or:
  - Requiring documentation of at least 2, 12-week, community-based work trials in integrated settings before a new entry for youth into a facility-based setting.
- **Require Children’s Long Term Support Case Managers to conduct career counseling discussions as part of their service plans.**
  - CLTS systems in WI have received limited tools and training on natural supports and connecting families to community assets.
- **Add language to the MCO/IRIS/county legacy contracts that expects integrated employment for youth with disabilities.**
  - Update the IDT staff core competencies to strengthen employment.
  - Target supported/competitive employment for youth ages 18-24 as a required specific “performance improvement project” for all MCOs.
  - Obtain an annually updated, signed statement from each member of working age or their legal guardian affirming that their team has explained the option to explore and pursue integrated employment, and that they understand their MCO can help them pursue integrated employment.
- **Create incentives to prioritize community-based, competitive wage employment within both Family Care and IRIS.**

This could include an even more sharply tiered rate structure to prioritize integrated employment, an emphasis on employment in the contract as a “performance improvement” priority, cash rewards for improving performance targets, and more.

- **Require each MCO to have at least 1.0 FTE Employment Coordinator dedicated to increasing the paid, integrated, community outcomes of Family Care members**  
Each MCO has a rep, but most have other job duties in addition to their employment coordination role.
- **Provide more transition and employment training to families, teachers, service providers, and youth**
  - Families need information on the transition process, including the broad range of employment options, and examples of youth/young adults with successful employment outcomes to help raise their expectations.
  - Youth need training and experience with self-determination, self-advocacy and leadership skills.
  - Teachers need more training on person centered planning, Discovery, and making employer connections.
  - Service providers need more training on incorporating career counseling discussion into the service plan.
- **Engage the broader community and decision makers in discussions of youth employment**
  - Hosting activities such as community conversations make this a community issue versus a family issue. If the community has higher expectations and raised awareness, youth will have more opportunities to find paid employment in their community.
- **Ensure that all youth with long-term support needs access Work Incentives Benefits Counseling.**
  - Youth and their families often have outdated or incorrect information about whether and how much they can work and still retain their health insurance through Medicaid. Work Incentives Benefits Counseling provided through the WIBA network has demonstrated that effective benefits counseling results in more individuals working, and that they work more hours per week at higher wages than those who do not receive work incentives benefits counseling.
- **Ensure that all interested youth have an opportunity to engage in needed services and supports already existing within the CLTS waiver, such as peer-to-peer mentoring for employment-related issues and supported employment.**

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