

WORK IS POSSIBLE

Understanding the Emerging Landscape of Employment

A Study Guide corresponding with the videos at

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCtqeCpyPJxTazl8q9WF9eVQ>

Introduction and Purpose:

As a companion to the *Understanding the Emerging Landscape of Employment* videos, this discussion guide was created for families, individuals with disabilities, and professionals as a way to spark conversation about employment. The videos and the guide offer an opportunity to create awareness, increase education and information-sharing, and provide thought-provoking questions about the pursuit of competitive, integrated employment.

This series was developed in response to the questions raised by implementation of Minnesota's Olmstead Plan and the need to have a positive message about work being possible for all individuals. The Family Involvement Committee, a sub-committee of the MN Chapter of Association of People Supporting Employment First, and its partners, worked to develop and widely share this message. The message has been communicated through a series of workshops for individuals and families. The workshops include information about the employment first policy and the MN Olmstead Plan. Additionally, it has included real stories told by individuals themselves of how they achieved successful employment. The MN Olmstead Plan is a broad series of key activities the State of Minnesota must accomplish to ensure people with disabilities are living, learning, working, and enjoying life in the most integrated settings. The MN Olmstead Plan will help achieve a better Minnesota for all Minnesotans, because it will support Minnesotans with disabilities to have the opportunity, both now and in the future to:

- Live close to their family and friends
- Live more independently
- Engage in productive employment
- Participate in community life

As individuals, when we have the ability to fully be a part of our communities, it is not only good for us, but for society as a whole. *"We all do better, when we all do better."* –MN Senator Paul Wellstone

This study guide is issued by the Family Involvement Committee – a subcommittee of the MN Chapter of the Association for People Supporting Employment First (MN APSE) - with collaboration from, Autism Society of Minnesota, Autism Works, Dakota County, National Alliance on Mental Illness, Olmstead Implementation Office (OIO), PACER Center, The Arc Greater Twin Cities, and The Arc MN.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction and Olmstead Overview,

Chris Davies, MN APSE and Darlene Zangara, Director of Olmstead Implementation Office

Minnesota's Olmstead is a statewide plan improving services, programming, and policies that will have a greater impact on the quality of life for people with disabilities. A vision for individuals to live, work, be involved and engaged at the level of their choice.

- Minnesota's Olmstead Plan – Why is it important to MN? _____

- How will the plan affect you? _____

- What does informed choice mean to you or the person you support? _____

- What are some of the benefits of having a job? _____

- Find the Minnesota Olmstead Plan here→
<http://www.mnapse.org/#!video-resources/a19sj>

THINK ABOUT IT!

- Employment First expects that people with disabilities will have access to information and opportunities to make an informed choice about working in jobs with competitive wages and benefits.
- Individuals who work in the competitive workforce can make more money than their peers who are paid sub minimum wages.
- The decision about whether or not to work (and where) is an individual's right and choice.

Chapter 2 - History and What Does This Mean For Me?

Sean Burke, Minnesota Disability Law Center and Andrea Zuber, Director of Social Service, Dakota County

- Why was the Olmstead Decision a landmark for people with disabilities? _____

- Do you think the Olmstead Plan can be a reality in MN? Why or why not? _____

 - What are your thoughts about using one primary type of residential model of service? _____

 - What is your opinion about day training and habilitation service (DH&H) and segregated work programs? _____

 - Do current services support person centered practices? Why or why not?

- What are some of the opportunities that the Minnesota Employment First Policy provides?

- What can you do during service planning to make sure that you or the person you are supporting has choices that create opportunities for full participation in their communities? _____

THINK ABOUT IT!

- Review the Minnesota Employment First Policy → <http://www.mnapse.org/#!video-resources/a19sj>
- If you have a county case manager, ask about how you (or the person you support) can access person centered planning.

Chapter 3 - Misconceptions and Stereotypes

Don Lavin, Executive Director Arc Minnesota

- Do you think that work is possible for all people who have the desire to work?

- Did the numbers surprise you? (Of those who were not working – over 60% said they would prefer to have a job. But for those who don't have a job, *less than half* have a job goal.) _____

- If you or the person you are supporting is still in high school, what are some ideas you can pursue for a paid job opportunity before graduation? (Remember: Paid work experience = Are 5 times more likely of having a job after leaving secondary education.) _____

- Have you heard any of the misconceptions and stereotypes presented by Don before? What other misconceptions or stereotypes have you heard about people with disabilities working? _____

- Did you realize that you believed some of the misconceptions described? Has the information presented changed your mind about any misconceptions or stereotypes?

- What are some concerns you have about how work impacts benefits? Where can you go with these questions? * _____

*Check out Disability Benefits 101 Information on page 10.

- After viewing this video, what interests or ideas are coming up that you or the person you're supporting may want to pursue in the community?

THINK ABOUT IT!

- Working age youth and adults with disabilities CAN work!
- It starts with willful intent! You can change your mind and change your life if you want something different.
- A parent's/guardian's expectations about the importance and value of competitive or supported employment are key drivers to achieving employment.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Take a tour of your community to see what businesses are there.
- Think about people you already know and what activities or interests you have in common.
- Set up a tour or informational meeting with a nearby business.
- Check out these 1 page resources: <https://mpccp.umn.edu/Employment>

Chapter 4 - Family Panel Discussion: Kathy, Josh, and Sean

How would you answer the questions Don posed to the panel members?

- Why do you choose to work and how does this job contribute to your overall life goals and plans? _____

- What barriers do you anticipate when you or the person you're supporting think about working? _____

- Did any of the items that the panelist brought up surprise you? What would you do in a similar situation? (Kathy's son getting bored and wanting to try new things? Josh's transportation issues? Sean's brother getting stuck?)

- What else would be helpful for you in assisting you or the person you're supporting to find a job? _____

THINK ABOUT IT!

- Have high expectations for work!
- Don't give up! There may be bumps in the road, but families and youth who maintain a vision for employment may be more likely to experience success in the long run.
- Gather information! Educate yourself about your community and options. See what jobs around there. If you or your family member need additional help, consider using a service provider.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Determine what you're good at and some of your interests.
- Write out life goals and how work can help you accomplish them.

Definitions and Resources

Please note this is not an exhaustive list of resources. These are items to be aware of that may have been referenced during the four videos. Even though the need for formal paid supports is often important in gaining employment it is not always necessary. Using informal support networks are shown to influence work opportunities for people without disabilities.

Community Rehabilitation Provider -Community Rehabilitation Providers are agencies or individuals approved to provide employment support to individuals with disabilities served by the state Vocational Rehabilitation programs (VR), or the Department of Human Services.

Competitive Employment - work performed by a person with a disability in an community based setting at minimum wage or higher, and at a rate comparable to non-disabled workers performing the same tasks.

County Case Management - Case management services aim to assist people with disabilities to become more independent and active in community life by assisting individuals to access, coordinate and monitor needed services and supports. Case manager responsibilities may include:

- Developing the Community Services Support Plan (CSSP)
- Informing the individual or his/her guardian about service options
- Consulting with relevant service providers or medical experts
- Assisting the person to identify potential providers of services
- Assisting the person to access services
- Coordinating services
- Evaluating and monitoring the services identified in the CSSP
- Reviewing and updating the CSSP and services provided at least annually

Informed choice - Includes:

- (a) Informing individuals through appropriate modes of communication, about the opportunities to exercise informed choice, including the availability of support services for individuals who require assistance in exercising informed choice;
- (b) Assisting individuals in exercising informed choice in making decisions;
- (c) Providing or assisting individuals in acquiring information that enables them to exercise informed choice in the development of their individualized plans with respect to the selection of outcomes, supports and services, service providers, the most integrated settings in which the supports and services will be provided, and methods for procuring services;
- (d) Developing and implementing flexible policies and methods that facilitate the provision of supports and services and afford individuals meaningful choices; and
- (e) Ensuring that the availability and scope of informed choice is consistent with the obligations of the respective agencies.

[Source: Based on 1998 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act]"

Employment First in Minnesota - Employment First is a national movement supported by the federal agencies and the Minnesota state agencies (DHS, DEED, MDE). It means competitive, integrated employment is the first and preferred outcome for all working-age people with disabilities, including people with and significant disabilities.

<https://mn.gov/dhs/partners-and-providers/continuing-care/reform-initiatives/employment-first.jsp>

(This website gives people with disabilities resources they need to work and aren't always easy to access).

Person Centered Planning – An ongoing process used to support people with disabilities plan for their future. In person centered planning, groups of people focus on an individual and that person's vision of what they would like to do in the future.

Learn more here <http://www.pacer.org/transition/learning-center/independent-community-living/person-centered.asp>

And here <https://ici.umn.edu/index.php?topics/view/21/>

MN's Protection and Advocacy (P&A) - A statewide project, Minnesota Disability Law Center provides free civil legal assistance to individuals with disabilities on legal issues that are related to their disabilities.

<http://mylegalaid.org/about/our-work/disability-law/>

Public Benefits – Below are some public benefits that may be available to a person with a disability. You can also get more information through: <https://www.minnesotahelp.info/>

- Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Minnesota Supplemental Aid (MSA)
- General Assistance (GA)
- Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Medical Assistance (MA)
- Medical Assistance for Employed People with Disabilities (MA-EPD)
- Medicare
- Social Security Plan to Achieve Self Support (PASS)
- Achieving a Better Life Experience Account (ABLE)
- Visit <https://mn.db101.org/> for information and resources of how work impacts benefits

Vocational Rehabilitation Services - Minnesota Vocational Rehabilitation Services provides persons with disabilities with a wide variety of counseling, training, job skills, and job placement services. They assist individuals access training or other services that a person may need to return to work, to enter a new line of work, or to enter the workforce for the first time. The services they provide are chosen to match your individual needs. Counselor will work with individuals to set goals and then develop a plan to reach them. Eligibility for Vocational Rehabilitation Services is based on disability status, barriers to employment, and availability of funding.

<https://mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/disabilities/>

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) – is the reauthorization of the Rehab Act (1973), and will help job seekers and workers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in accessing employment opportunities.

In Minnesota eight Independent Living (IL) Centers throughout the state of Minnesota will be responsible for ensuring that the career counseling, information, and referral process is documented for Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS). For more information please visit apse.org/wioa-plan-review-guide/

To learn more about the work of MN APSE visit www.mnapse.org