

Westside Regional Center **Employment First Policy**

It is Westside Regional Center's mission to empower people with developmental disabilities and their families to choose and access community services that facilitate a quality of life comparable to persons without disabilities.

Employment enables adults to lead independent and productive lives while contributing to their community. Consistent with the Lanterman Act, inclusive and competitive work will be the first option considered by planning teams for every WRC working age adult. Integrated, inclusive and competitive employment will be given the highest priority for working age individuals with developmental disabilities, regardless of the severity of their disability.

This policy will be applied to individuals currently attending non-inclusive work activity programs, sub minimum wage employment, day programs and those clients seeking new services. This policy will be facilitated through the individual planning process.

WRC will work collaboratively with local school districts, educational institutions, transition programs, and community organizations to ensure the administration of this policy. Transition age clients and their families will be educated regarding Employment First and students will have active goal development and transition planning to this end.

Individuals who may require training and/or other support to achieve integrated employment will receive assistance such as individual or group job coaching, job exploration, specialized job supports, technical or vocational training, post -secondary education, internship and apprenticeship programs.

Competitive work is income-producing activity for which the individual receives the same compensation as a nondisabled worker and includes employment, self-employment and micro-businesses. When paid work is not an option for an individual, as determined and documented in the IPP by the individual and/or their planning team, volunteer work opportunities will be explored and supported.

Individuals not participating in competitive employment shall have daily access to meaningful, integrated, age-appropriate activities that are based on individual needs, interests, abilities, and promote the development of critical skills, leading to independence and full inclusion in their communities.

To ensure successful implementation of this policy, WRC will provide education and training to all stakeholders, advocate for and promote employment of people with developmental disabilities, assist service providers in transition and work collaboratively with all service systems to promote Employment First. WRC supports new program development demonstrating facilitation of this policy in practice.