



Early Childhood, Special Education, and Title Program Services

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KSDE Policy Statement on Employment First

As a relevant state agency in the implementation of Employment First policy, the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) is responsible for the monitoring of district practices in planning for and providing appropriate transition services to students with significant disabilities, and assuring that KSDE developed resources and materials encourage Employment First policy.

Research demonstrates that when provided with preparatory, hands-on job experience in the form of part-time work, internships, or summer employment, students with significant disabilities can successfully obtain and sustain work in integrated settings and earn competitive wages. The goal of publically-funded transition services and supports for youth with significant disabilities should be focused on helping these youth to acquire the skills, knowledge and experience necessary to obtain jobs in integrated settings at a competitive wage that promotes community participation and self-sufficiency.

As part of the implementation of Employment First policy, one role for educators is to assist students and their families to understand the range of available employment possibilities, providing information about competitive, integrated employment as the first consideration in transition planning.

Federal and state laws require school districts to provide transition planning and services for students with significant disabilities through the Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Beginning not later than the first IEP to be in effect when the child turns 16, or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP Team, and updated annually thereafter, the IEP must include:

- *Appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age-appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment and, where appropriate, independent living skills;*
- *The transition services (including courses of study) needed to assist the child in reaching those goals; and*
- *Beginning not later than one year before the child reaches the age of majority under State law, a statement that the child has been informed of the child's rights under Part B, if any, that will transfer to the child on reaching the age of majority under §300.520 [see 20 U.S.C. 1415(m)].*

[34 CFR 300.320(b) and (c)] [20 U.S.C. 1414 (d)(1)(A)(i)(VIII)]

The term "transition services" means a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that:

- *Is designed to be within a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment); continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation;*
- *Is based on the individual child's needs, taking into account the child's strengths, preferences, and interests; and*
- *Includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.*

[34 CFR 300.43 (a)] [20 U.S.C. 1401(34)]

Key Requirements in the Employment First Law:

1. Competitive and Integrated Employment is the First Option

Competitive, integrated employment must be the first option when providing services or supports to people with disabilities. This requirement is often called by the term “Employment First” (meaning that programs and services start with competitive, integrated employment as the FIRST option)

Action: KSDE has established an agency Employment First policy that is publically available on the KSDE website.

2. Policy is Effectively Implemented in all Programs and Services

All state agencies must follow Employment First and ensure it is effectively implemented in all programs and services.

Action: KSDE materials and resources will be revised to address Employment First policy implementation in programs and services.

3. State Programs, Policies, Procedures and Funding Support Competitive and Integrated Employment

All state agencies must coordinate efforts and collaborate to ensure that all state programs, policies, procedures and funding support competitive and integrated employment of individuals with disabilities.

Action: KSDE will maintain federally required interagency agreements and collaborate with other state agencies as needed to ensure implementation of Employment First policy.

4. Data Sharing

All state agencies share data and information across systems in order to better track outcomes and success under employment first.

Action: KSDE will share relevant state and program data to track student outcomes related to Employment First (e.g., State Performance Plan Cluster 1 Indicators, SLDS).