

# A Shift in the Force – Employment First

**Minnesota Employment First Coalition**



Making employment the *first* option for people with disabilities.

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**The Perfect Storm**



- A shift in the force
- A couple of “old guys”
- It was time to act
- MN APSE Strategic Plan
- MN MIG Strategic Plan
- Indiana Summit
- MN Dept. of Education Grant
- Key state leadership changes
- Federal interest (ODEP, SSA)

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**The Perfect Storm**



- Workforce labor shortages
- Shrinking public funding \$
- Public policy reforms
- Changing attitudes about disability and employment
- Emerging technologies
- SE/CE practices
- Evidence-based research

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# A Shift in the Force – Employment First



## Employment First

- Means expecting, encouraging, providing, creating, and rewarding integrated employment in the workforce;
- at minimum or competitive wages and benefits;
- as the first and preferred outcome for working-age youth and adults with disabilities;
- especially those with complex and significant disabilities, for whom job placement in the past has been limited, or has not traditionally occurred.

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## Coalition Members

- MN APSE
- Pathways to Employment (MIG)
  - DHS
  - DEED
  - MN State Council on Disabilities
- MN Department of Education
- Consumer Survivor Network
- PACER
- Social Security Administration
- Ramsey County Human Services

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## Core Vision

- Building a Minnesota economy and workforce where youth and adults with disabilities, including individuals with significant disabilities, have real opportunities to:
  - become competitively employed
  - use their talents and skills
  - work alongside other Minnesotans in the workforce
  - earn meaningful, competitive wages thereby contributing to their self-support.

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# A Shift in the Force – Employment First



## Core Values

- *People with significant disabilities should have the right to enjoy their lives as much as their peers do.*
- *Working is fundamental to adulthood, quality of life issues, and earning the means to exercise our freedoms and choices as citizens.*

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## The Focus of the Summit:

*Youth & Young Adults in Transition from School to Careers*

- The best way to change the future is to begin by creating new pathways to opportunities for Minnesota's youth.
- Develop a system where integrated jobs in the workforce or enrollment in Minnesota's higher education system is the preferred option for all youth and young adults leaving secondary education.

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## Key Summit Recommendations

- **Establish** Minnesota as a national leader in promoting the employment of adults with disabilities.
- **Continue** an ongoing dialogue and connection among Minnesota's Employment First champions.
- **Launch** an Employment First vision to make competitive, integrated employment in the workforce common policy and practice in Minnesota.

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# A Shift in the Force – Employment First



**Key Summit Recommendations**

- **Build** on known and emerging strengths in policy and practice in Minnesota.
- **Launch** and support local initiatives that focus on building the capacity of communities to promote “Employment First” policies and practices (i.e. Communities of Practice).
- **Develop** training & technical assistance resources to redirect and execute an “employment first” vision in Minnesota.

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**Key Summit Recommendations**

- **Re-brand** “rehabilitation” in both language and practice in favor of strengths-based, customized (negotiated) employment strategies.
- **Establish** a single statewide definition of *integrated employment* and implement uniform practices of performance measurement across all State agencies and disability service systems in Minnesota.

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**Integrated Employment**

- **Regular or customized employment in the workforce on the payroll of a company (unless self-employed) at minimum or prevailing wages and benefits.**
- **Employment where integration and interaction with co-workers without disabilities and customers is assured.**

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# A Shift in the Force – Employment First



## What's Next?

- The Manifesto has been completed, distributed and posted on the Minnesota ASPE website.
- Meet with stakeholders and interested parties to discuss Employment First.
- Expand the Employment First Coalition – *get the right people on the bus*.
- A “mini summit” of key stakeholders and policy makers was held on April 9, 2008.
- A second “Employment First Summit” will be held in the fall of 2008.
- Increase business understanding and involvement in Employment First.
- Plan and host a national Employment First Summit to be held in 2009.

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## Mini-Summit: April 9, 2008

- 26 leaders from state and federal government
- 13 members of the MN Employment First Coalition
- State department leaders and Federal partners shared the disability employment initiatives underway at their respective agencies
- Identify action steps and partnership strategies to make Minnesota an Employment First state by 2013.

1. *Utilize the Consensus Report definition of employment to gather data on the true employment rates of Minnesotans with disabilities*
2. *Launch and Employment First vision and public policy*
3. *Establish training and technical assistance to promote Employment First in Minnesota*
4. *Build capacity in local communities*

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## What's Next?

- Co-presented with Indiana APSE in Louisville
- Met with ODEP regarding national summit
- Connections with other state employment first leaders
  - Washington, Georgia, Florida, Iowa, Missouri, Indiana, North Dakota, Colorado, North Carolina
  - Wisconsin Mentoring Project
  - National Organizational Change Forum (Sept. 2008)
- Dissemination of Mini-Summit report
- Greater involvement of business – Summit 2
  - “What will it take for you to drive the bus?”
- Keeping the momentum going

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**For More Information**

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- *More information and a complete copy of the Consensus Report (Manifesto) go to [www.mnapse.org](http://www.mnapse.org).*

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