



Minnesota

EMPLOYMENT
First

Summit

A Consensus Report

A Manifesto on the Employment
of Minnesotans with Disabilities
In the Integrated, Competitive Workforce

June 12, 2007

This manifesto is our public declaration of our values and principles, and of our intention to act on these values, to make “Employment First” common public policy and practice in Minnesota. This document is one outcome of a summit meeting of many leaders in Minnesota’s disability communities and agencies.

Employment First

is the vision of making employment the first priority and preferred outcome of people with disabilities

“Employment First” as used in this manifesto

- 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
- including those with complex and significant disabilities, for whom job placement in the past has been limited, or has not traditionally occurred.



Employment:

Federal and state agencies currently use many different definitions of employment when describing programs and outcomes of people with disabilities. For clarity, then, for the purposes of this manifesto this is what we mean by employment:

Regular or customized employment in the workforce

- where employees with disabilities are included on the payroll of a competitive business or industry (unless self-employed)
- where the assigned employment tasks offer at least minimum or prevailing wages and benefits
- and offer ordinary opportunities for integration and interactions with co-workers without disabilities, with customers, and/or the general public

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- **Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS)**
- **Minnesota DHS Pathways to Employment Initiative**
- **Minnesota Department of Employment & Economic Development (DEED)**
- **Minnesota Rehabilitation Services (RS)**
- **Minnesota Department of Education (MDE)**
- **University of Minnesota’s Institute of Community Integration (ICI)**
- **Minnesota APSE—The Network on Employment**
- **Parent’s Advocacy Center for Educational Rights, PACER Center, Inc.**
- **University of Illinois at Urbana’s Region-Five Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program (RCEP).**

Additional copies of the manifesto are available on the web at
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Alternative formats of this document are available and accessible by contacting Minnesota APSE—The Network on Employment at

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Background: Unemployment among People with Disabilities

In November of 2006, the national unemployment rate in the United States had dropped to a five-year low of 4.4 %, the federal Department of Labor announced. This was welcome news; many Americans would assume such good news would have a positive impact on job/career opportunities for all citizens. Unfortunately, this isn't the case; even in a time of job growth, our largest minority population is far less likely to be employed. This minority is the millions of Americans who live with disabilities.

The high unemployment rate for Americans with disabilities is a national embarrassment. Despite our best efforts at "rehabilitation," most national studies consistently show the unemployment rate for people with significant disabilities to be in the range of 60-70%. It has been estimated as high as 90% for some disability populations, such as adults with serious mental illnesses (President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health, 2003). In sum, the high unemployment rate for Americans with disabilities is systemic and is too often accepted as an inevitable outcome of living with a physical, mental, or emotional disability.

Interestingly, Minnesotans with disabilities are often reported to be employed at rates higher than national averages. However, the actual unemployment rate looks much like national levels when we apply traditionally accepted standards for competitive employment and minimum wages. A high percentage of Minnesotans with significant disabilities (including adults with developmental disabilities, serious and persistent mental illnesses, traumatic brain injuries, those with complex disability conditions) tend to be either unemployed and/or served in center-based programs featuring segregation, sheltered work, and non-work related options.

There is increased pressure on public and private employment and rehabilitation programs, as well as secondary education systems, to improve their performance in job placement. Frankly, the problem isn't that traditional job placement methods don't work. They do—but they do not work effectively for all people with disabilities. For people who have the most complex

disabilities and barriers to employment, the more traditional approaches are not highly effective. Low job placement outcomes, and higher enrollment rates in center-based work and non-work programs, clearly document that for many Minnesotans with disabilities, competitive employment is not viewed as an expectation but rather a “choice” or “possibility” based on their access to funding and progressive services.

A Call for Change in Minnesota

Many good reasons are offered for the high unemployment of adults with significant disabilities. However, none can stand the test of objective scrutiny as reasons to exclude people from job placement consideration. National job placement and employment research initiatives have demonstrated repeatedly

..the real need is to rehabilitate the vision and goals driving Minnesota’s educational and rehabilitation service systems for youth and adults with disabilities.

that people with disabilities can obtain jobs in the workforce and can use their talents when a willing employer is found, and when the employee has access to responsive support and customized employment services. (.E.g., Boeltzig, Heike, Dana Scott Gilmore, and John Butterworth: The National Survey of Community Rehabilitation Providers, FY 2004-2005. Report 1: Employment Outcomes of People with Developmental Disabilities in Integrated Employment. This report, and related research-to-practice reports can be accessed online at www.communityinclusion.org.)

In truth, the real challenge is not in rehabilitating people. Rather, the real need is to rehabilitate the vision and goals driving Minnesota’s educational and rehabilitation service systems for youth and adults with disabilities.

In other words, Minnesota needs to rebuild its infrastructure of support to promote the fundamental idea that all people with disabilities should exercise their choice to work, regardless of the severity of their disabilities.

Accomplishing this objective means changing conventional norms, increasing our expectations, and moving Minnesota's secondary education, higher education, and adult disability service delivery systems in completely new directions. We need to craft an educational and adult service system that encourages, supports, and rewards paid, integrated employment in the workforce as the first option for every individual.

Why a Vision of "Employment First" Matters in Minnesota

Here are five key reasons why the philosophy of Employment First makes sense for Minnesota:

- 1) **It's a human rights issue.** Why shouldn't Minnesotans with significant disabilities live and enjoy their lives as their peers do? Working is fundamental to adulthood, quality of life, individual productivity, and earning the means to exercise freedoms and choices available to all citizens.
- 2) **We can't afford to have people with disabilities not working.** It's important for all Minnesotans to contribute to their self-support up to the level of their capabilities. A lifetime of financial dependency on disability benefit programs such as Social Security and Medical Assistance is a costly proposition. We need to change this pattern to one of self-support for as many people as possible.
- 3) **We need everybody contributing to our economy.** Virtually every national workforce study warns us about emerging labor shortages in the United States. Living with a disability doesn't mean a person doesn't also have abilities. Job placement of unemployed people with disabilities can be at least a part of the answer to the forecasted labor shortages in Minnesota.
- 4) **Americans want people with disabilities contributing in the labor force.** In a recent national Gallup Poll sponsored by America's Strength Foundation, 92%

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of the respondents reported they held a “more favorable” or “much more favorable” opinion about companies who hire people with disabilities. 87% of these respondents said they would prefer to “give their business” to companies who hire people with disabilities. (“National Survey of Consumer Attitudes” Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, January 2006, Vol. 24, Issue 1. IOS Press.)

- 5) **Minnesota will lead.** The State of Minnesota has always been in the forefront of social change and creating better opportunities for its residents with disabilities. Today, Minnesota is well positioned to move ahead with progressive changes and lead the nation in developing or creating integrated employment and higher education for its youth and adults with disabilities.



Minnesota’s Employment First Summit: A Blueprint for Change

The idea of holding an “Employment First Summit” in Minnesota to create a blueprint for real change was originally advanced by Minnesota APSE – The Network on Employment. The leadership of Minnesota APSE established partnerships with the event’s major funders as well as other interested organizations and groups. An interagency committee was convened for planning this event. The planning group developed strategies or outreach and

invitations to a wide range of prospective participants from public and private agencies, schools, disability service providers, advocacy organizations, employers, people with disabilities and their families, concerned citizens and neighborhood groups, and individuals from the general public.

The goal was to work toward a common framework for social and economic change. The planning committee's core vision was to create an economy and workforce in Minnesota 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, and earn meaningful, competitive wages, thereby contributing to their self-support.

The Focus of the Summit: Youth & Young Adults in Transition from School to Careers

The summit's core sponsors and agency collaborators recognize the best way to change the future is to begin by creating better outcomes and new pathways to opportunities for Minnesota's youth. For this reason, there was a consensus to focus the summit's proceedings on developing integrated employment in the workforce or enrollment within Minnesota's higher education system as the first option for youth and young adults leaving secondary education programs. The summit's planning committee designed an event that embraced and considered the goal of a zero exclusion policy.

The Purpose and Goals of the Summit


The goal of the summit's planning committee was to bring together key constituents throughout Minnesota who believe strongly in the idea that integrated employment in the workforce at competitive wages should be the expected and first choice of Minnesotans with significant disabilities. The summit's planners invited more than 100 key leaders including people with disabilities, family members, disability advocates, educators, government policymakers, business leaders, employment service providers, human services professionals, veterans representatives, and other interested citizens to

participate in the event. The invited participants represented working-age youth and adults with a wide array of disabilities including those with developmental disabilities, intellectual and learning disabilities, serious mental illnesses, traumatic brain injuries, the deaf/hard of hearing, the blind/deafblind, those with serious medical illnesses and physical conditions, and veterans with disabilities.

Minnesota's Employment First collaborators were not interested in conducting a summit to further "study" or rehash issues driving the high unemployment of Minnesotans with disabilities. Many of the proposed reasons are known and well-documented. Instead, the defined purpose for this summit event was to identify how the State of Minnesota can move forward and make historic changes leading to increased job placement and integrated employment in the workforce as the first option for all youth and adults with disabilities.

Changing public expectations is the engine of social change. Therefore, a key goal for the summit was to change conventional thinking about what is possible by sharing new methods to narrow the unemployment gap and increase productivity of all people with disabilities.

The summit's planning committee approached the scheduled event with an assumption that competitive employment is attainable and within the reach of most adults with disabilities. This means examining what it means to be "job qualified." For some, this means simply accessing conventional job search and employment development practices. However, for many others, it means access to customized and supported employment practices. It means encouraging businesses and industries to



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employ the identified talents of people with significant disabilities at job market wages. Finally, it means offering responsive public education and technical consultation to assist business leaders in recruiting, hiring, training, supervising, and supporting their employees with disabilities.

Logistics & Core Strategies of the Summit

Minnesota's Employment First Summit was held on June 12, 2007 at the Arboretum in Chaska, Minnesota. To effectively address the core purposes of the event, the following strategies were employed:

- 100 individuals were invited to attend the structured, one-day event; the goal was to solicit their ideas about strategies for resolving or minimizing identified barriers to employment. Focus was on effective priorities for action (i.e., specific policy reforms, transportation, funding, services redesign, new legislation, professional staff development or retraining, more effective coordination of education and adult services, better use of assistive technology applications, use of customized employment techniques, etc.).
- The invited participants represented specific "affinity groups" including people with disabilities, educators, employers, direct service professionals, program managers, funders, policymakers, family members, disability advocates, directors of state and county agencies, neighborhood and community leaders, and interested citizens. The summit's participants were invited because of their reputations as champions of an Employment First philosophy. In addition to recruiting from specific constituencies, the planning committee worked hard to identify and invite participants from urban, suburban, and rural regions of the state of Minnesota.
- Mr. Neil Romano, a nationally known expert on disability and employment, (and, since the Summit meeting, nominated to be Assistant Secretary of Labor, Disability Employment Policy) was invited as a keynote speaker. Mr. Romano is the founder of America's Strength Foundation, which recently conducted, in collaboration with the Gallup Poll and University of

Massachusetts' Center for Social Development and Education, a national study of emerging attitudes among Americans about disability and employment. Romano shared the findings of surprisingly positive attitudes Americans feel toward businesses that do hire people with disabilities; he discussed the implications of this study in an American economy that will experience serious labor shortages. He offered his provocative views about America's need to move away from a system that offers "programs" and stagnation, and to move toward a business model that "invests" in individuals with disabilities as economic assets.

- The summit was facilitated by trained representatives from the University of Minnesota's Institute on Community Integration (ICI). The goal was to secure valuable feedback, opinions, suggestions, ideas, strategies, and recommendations to address specific areas of essential reform; all feedback was recorded, catalogued, analyzed, and communicated.
- All of the summit's proceedings were recorded and prioritized so that helpful ideas and useful strategies were identified and catalogued by each specific affinity group as well as by mixed teams comprised of representatives from all affinity groups. The recorded information from the event's proceedings was subsequently analyzed by the planning committee to build a consensus report with specific recommendations being forwarded by the invited leaders.

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- By design, a formal consensus report was to be written and shared with all participants and other stakeholders crucial to promoting the recommendations throughout the State of Minnesota. This Manifesto is a blueprint for future actions to be taken, with specific recommendations to be shared with and implemented by all key participants, and by other leaders in Minnesota who share a common concern and vision.

Identifying and Building on Strengths in Minnesota's Employment Support Systems

A number of key strengths were identified in Minnesota's present system of programs and services in support of youth and adults with disabilities who want to go to work in the workforce. These core strengths include, but are not limited to the following:

- Medical Assistance for Employed Persons with Disabilities (MA-EPD)
- Pathways to Employment
- Stay Well, Stay Working
- Evidence-Based Practices in Supported Employment Initiatives in the area of Mental Health
- Minnesota's Business Leadership Network
- Minnesota's Policy Incentives in State Extended Employment Funding Favoring Integrated Employment at Competitive Wages
- Emerging Social Security Disability Work Incentives
- Collaborative policies and projects at State Agency Levels by DEED, DHS, and MDE
- Emerging directives in secondary and special education promoting post-secondary education, training, and competitive employment outcomes for transition-age youth

- Emerging federal and State priorities promoting competitive employment outcomes for youth and adults with disabilities
- Emerging practices in customized and supported employment promoting strengths-based marketing in the job placement of youth and adults with significant disabilities in the workforce
- Training and development of occupational communication specialists to promote the job placement and support of adults who are deaf/hard of hearing.

Common Themes Identified by Affinity Groups & Attendees of the Summit

Once the summit's proceedings were completed, recorded, and analyzed, the planning committee organized all principle and recurrent themes by the event's affinity group attendees. Here is a sample of comments from each of the constituencies:

Consumers:

1. Employment should be the expectation - across the board.
2. Remove fear from disinformation (i.e. losing benefits).
3. Money should go to the person and not to providers.
4. Employers need to challenge their employees with disabilities. Allow them to use their knowledge, education, and experiences.
5. More consumer representation on boards is needed.
6. There is too much segregation, and people aren't being informed about all the opportunities because of a lack of networking.

“Employment should be the expectation – across the board.”

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7. There should be a 'buffet of options' for individuals with disabilities including: transportation, transition planning, good education, health insurance, etc. Increase in asset limits.
 8. I think an investment approach has some key principles that should be applied as we push for employment for people with disabilities. These principles include:
 - a. People with disabilities have skills suitable for employment.
 - b. Accurate information about how work impacts government benefits is needed for informed decision making.
 - c. Real work should be paid at real wages.
 - d. Continuing support between employer and employee prevents long term problems emerging.
 - e. Having a choice in jobs is essential in maintaining motivation.
 - f. Career development and job mobility are normal parts of working life.
 - g. Training is best delivered on the job in real situations.
 - h. Work first.



Business:

9. One said he had return on investment because he has reliable employees and is now able to eat dinner at home.

-
10. The reality of the job market is that there are going to be fewer people in the job market than we will need. We do not have the people to fill the positions.
 11. Tell the success stories, but instead of telling about accommodations, talk about streamlining the process.
 12. Employers should look at people's skills and fit jobs around their abilities instead of trying to teach the individual to improve their weaknesses.
 13. Support and consult with businesses.



Policy Makers:

14. Change language to reinforce an Employment First message (to all audiences).
15. Create a state Employment First Policy and support it with funding.
16. Host technical assistance sessions designed to give participants the "How To's" for: linking workforce and economic development; effectively impacting policy at all levels; holding industry summits and focus groups; relating better with elected officials; leveraging resources; and improving services for individuals with disabilities so that they can be a solution to the impending work-force shortage issues that Minnesota will be experiencing.
17. Create a concerted education program for people with disabilities, parents, providers, policy makers and businesses about making employment the first option.

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18. An investment approach changes the kind of dialogue you have with others and it certainly changes the way you approach your work. In order to drive an outcome, the investment approach would have to be adopted by leaders and decision makers, individuals at the implementation level, and the individuals and families themselves.
 19. We have been discussing the need for meaningful systems changes in Minnesota for more than 20 years. When are we going to take it seriously and do what needs to be done?

Educators:

20. Expand the use of collaborative service delivery programs as a mechanism for delivering transition services.
21. Extend secondary school reform efforts to include career development, applied learning in the community, and transition planning as a central part of the regular education curriculum.
22. Transform Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) into a strength-based platform.
23. Educate families and teachers about the strength of the IEP in terms of what gets written, gets done.
24. Build, use, incorporate community partnerships, particularly with business.
25. Expand on apprenticeships, work more with unions, and assist individuals in marketing themselves.
26. Develop training for all involved on how to talk with business.
27. Allow failure-sometimes it's the best teacher.

Interagency:

28. Almost all of the change and legislation we have was started by individuals themselves and/or families. If the push doesn't come from the actual constituency it may never be successful.

“Stop investing in segregation – close the ‘back door.’”

- 29. Invest in community organizing among those who have a vested interest in this issue.
- 30. Involve the business community in the solution of this problem.
- 31. Students should go right from school into a job.
- 32. Stop investing in segregation - close the "back door."
- 33. Create, expand and nurture partnerships with like-minded individuals and organizations.
- 34. Everyone, whether you have a diagnosed disability or not, has both skills and limitations. We too often focus on the limitations of PWD, and not enough on skills. Bottom line-we need to identify what each person can contribute to our economy.

Providers:

- 35. Look at language, be mindful, eliminate sub-minimal wage, convert social service model to business model, move to other end of continuum.
- 36. Change language, promote that people have value, why it's important, close the door on the end of the continuum, no more money to support and maintain, changing policies, choice - that it's supporting informed choice, setting goals and standards, how to direct resources.
- 37. Challenging those arguments that are out there.
- 38. Flexible funding, work is important, trade associations, committed people, person-centered.
- 39. Group homes and other providers need to be more flexible in hours and days of the week (weekend availability) because that is when many businesses need to operate and need employees.

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40. **Everyone** has something to contribute. We need to first develop a common vision, and then develop the policy. It should contain language around the removal of sub-minimum wage, a significant outreach to business including training and technical assistance, and include all people with disabilities, regardless of the perceived severity. There needs to be a restructuring of the "reimbursement" system for providers into one that promotes and rewards jobs and good jobs (i.e. high paying).
 41. Just talking about investment promotes employment. It is integral to all we say and do. It often pisses people off, because they perceive we are being critical of them or are treating people as commodities and it is time for them to get over it.
 42. Our current system of supports for people with disabilities continues at times to exemplify historically low expectations society has had for people with disabilities. With the expectations so low, I do sometimes believe we are simply maintaining people with disabilities.
 43. Because of the diversity of the disability population, it will require a long-term care system that gives people real choice in how and in what environment they will receive the supports they need. This means a system built to work for all people, without regard to age or disability. One that begins with the assumption that adults with disabilities want to work and receive supports from family and friends. We also need to look holistically at people with disabilities and understand that long term care should be integrated with acute care services, that personal care attendants are a reasonable workplace accommodation, and that people should have freedom in choosing where they work and not be forced into certain types of work because it is easier for the provider. Having a system that is comprehensive in scope will move us away from our legacy of simply maintaining people with disabilities so they can survive another day - and toward investing in them, with an expectation of return.

Consensus
Recommendations
from
The Minnesota
Employment
First
Summit

The summit's diverse base of attendees shared many excellent ideas about potential ways to increase the job placement and competitive employment of Minnesotans with disabilities. The summit's planning committee has taken steps to identify high priority recommendations where there was a clear consensus for action. These recommendations include the following:

- **Establish Minnesota as a national leader in promoting the employment of adults with disabilities.** Employers need to be active partners in any solution to address the high unemployment of Minnesotans with disabilities. Attendees recommended that a statewide campaign be launched at the highest levels of government to educate business leaders about this untapped labor pool. The ultimate goal is to make Minnesota a model and leading state in the nation in the competitive employment of adults with disabilities, including individuals with multiple disabilities and significant job-related barriers. Accordingly, the State of Minnesota should lead by example and hire the identified strengths of adults with significant disabilities in visible, competitive and customized employment positions.
- **Continue an ongoing dialogue and connection among Minnesota's Employment First champions.** There was strong interest for an ongoing dialogue about Employment First issues. Also, there was a strong interest for the Employment First Summit to become an annual event to continue momentum around specific objectives for system change in Minnesota.
- **Launch an Employment First vision and public policy for all Minnesotans living with disabilities.** Attendees identified a need for strong state leadership concerning public policy reforms to raise expectations about competitive employment. A cross-section of participants expressed concerns that current public policies are not working in obtaining

competitive employment for a majority of Minnesotans with disabilities. A number of participants identified a need for significant statewide public policy reforms similar to changes made in the State of Washington. Washington State recently engaged a Working Age Adult Policy (WAAP), thereby raising expectations about competitive employment in the workforce for all. New and revised policies in Minnesota should reinforce an Employment First vision by directing public funding toward competitive employment, or toward specific service pathways leading to integrated jobs at competitive wages and benefits for all.

The ultimate goal is to make Minnesota a model and leading state in the nation in the competitive employment of adults with disabilities, including individuals with multiple disabilities and significant job-related barriers.

- **Build upon Minnesota's known & emerging strengths.**

Participants stressed the importance of building and expanding upon known and emerging strengths in Minnesota's public and private employment provider system. To illustrate: emerging directions toward evidence-based practices in supported employment (EBP-SE) for adults with serious mental illnesses; customized employment practices for youth with significant disabilities in transition from school-to-careers; promoting better access to Medical Assistance for Employment Persons with Disabilities (MA-EPD); and using occupational communication practices in supported employment for adults

who are deaf or hard of hearing. Practices like these should be reinforced, publicized, and expanded.

- **Launch "*Communities of Practice*" demonstrations.** Attendees stressed the importance of "thinking globally, but acting locally." It was recommended that Minnesota consider funding several Communities of Practice (COP) demonstrations in both urban and rural areas of Minnesota (e.g., school-to-career transition services). By design, Minnesota's COPs would engage interagency practices with key collaborating secondary and post-secondary schools, workforce centers, and other adult service providers leading to post-secondary education, training, and/or competitive employment outcomes.

The core goal is to craft new language and realign messages to encourage and expect integrated employment at competitive wages and benefits for all.

- **Develop training & technical assistance resources to redirect and execute an "employment for all" vision.** There was an expressed need for the creation of a training and technical assistance (T&TA) entity in Minnesota to provide critical training and technical support services for the leadership, management, and direct service staff of Minnesota's secondary

education, and to the disability, business, and employment provider communities. It was strongly recommended that this entity incorporate T&TA strategies that focus specifically on Employment First practices. A T&TA entity is needed to eliminate fragmentation and introduce a model of organizational change and staff development practices through the use strategies including: web-based training; state and regional training workshops; peer-to-peer mentoring; forums on employment-first issues; dissemination of promising policies and practices in workforce development and employment practices; identification of funding and other resources; individual case consultations; disability benefits planning.

- **Rebranding "Rehabilitation" in Language and Practices.** There was a strong recommendation to modernize and humanize the strategic marketing of "rehabilitation" in favor of a strengths-based employment model. The core goal is to craft new language and realign messages to encourage and expect integrated employment at competitive wages and benefits for all. This recommendation includes changing fundamental messages about people with disabilities, their talents, and their employment potential in today's economy.
- **Establish a single statewide definition for integrated employment, and initiate uniform practices of performance measurement across all state agencies and all disability service systems in Minnesota.**

The State of Minnesota has been using numerous data systems to track employment of people with disabilities. Reviewing these systems has shown many inadequacies. The limited measures of outcome in use are unclear, they use different definitions, and they are not coordinated between different State agencies. There is so much fragmentation of data collecting and of measures used that we can't accurately report how many people

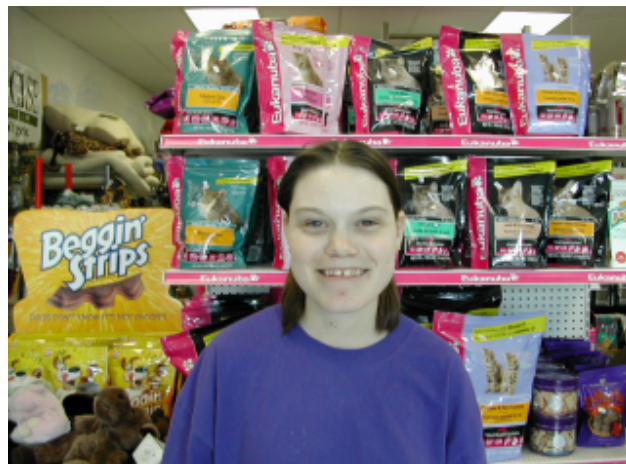
with disabilities are employed, what settings they work in, or how much they are earning. Using common definitions of employment and disability, and the same measurement tools among State agencies, will help us use data in improving public policy and the quality of service.

There was a recommendation to craft a uniform definition of employment, to improve communications and bring about higher fidelity in practices, so we can accurately measure the employment rate of adults with disabilities. The Summit's attendees recommended that the basic uniform standards of measurement include:

- 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.

Other minimum standards to sustain successful employment and wage outcomes, should also be factored in, such as:

- Individual's job preferences
- Customization of job tasks or hours worked
- Planning access to employer-based or agency-based job supports, where appropriate



Follow-up: A Minnesota Mini-Summit

By design, the Minnesota Employment First Coalition has planned a "mini-summit" to share the summit's findings and discuss implications, with key Minnesota leaders, for future public policy in the State of Minnesota. Participants in the mini-summit will represent state and county governments, disability and employment policy and regulations, business and industry, secondary and post-secondary education, disability advocacy, disability community service and employment providers, the summit's planning committee, and other invited parties. The mini-summit will be held in early 2008.

The mini-summit is intended to introduce interagency goals of Employment First strategies and competitive employment at the state, county, and local levels. For example, Minnesota APSE-The Network on Employment has already conducted a strategic planning session and has adopted all of the recommendations from the summit as a framework for its statewide legislative, training, and employment advocacy goals. The summit's planning committee is hoping to engage similar interagency planning with measurable goals and outcomes to be achieved in the coming year.

Future Minnesota Employment First Summits

Due to the outstanding enthusiasm and participation at the Minnesota Employment First Summit held in 2007, there is a strong demand from the summit's participants to keep the momentum and dialogue going forward. A second Minnesota Employment First Summit is being planned for late spring or early summer. The planning and logistics for this conference are already underway and will be announced in early 2008.

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