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| Employment First is spreading across the US  * **33 States** have adopted an official commitment to Employment First through legislation, executive order, policy directive, or a combination of these. * This includes most **all of our Midwest neighbors** including **Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, Ohio, and Michigan.**  Let’s Make Wisconsin an Employment First State |

**What is Employment First?**

A national movement that is helping states improve their economies through the intentional creation of policies and practices that result in a significant increase in the numbers of people with disabilities employed in community jobs that pay at least minimum wage. Employment First is about providing **all** people with disabilities the opportunity to work in the community ***as the primary outcome and first priority of publicly-funded disability services.***

**Why should Wisconsin become an Employment First state?**

* **People with disabilities are underemployed** **–** In Wisconsin, **81.3%** of working-age adults without disabilities are employed while only **36.3%** of working-age adults with disabilities are employed. [2012 Wisconsin Report at [www.disabilitystatistics.org](http://www.disabilitystatistics.org)]
* **Employing people with disabilities is good for businesses** **and the economy -** People with disabilities make quality, committed employees. The turnover for employees with disabilities is 8% as compared to 45% for other workers. [Source: 2003 Crain's Chicago Business Survey, Washington Mutual, Inc. study] Employing people with disabilities can help Wisconsin businesses **meet their workforce needs** **and grow their bottom line** as Wisconsin’s economy continues to recover.
* **People who work rely less on public support -** Evidence shows that being employed is directly linked to reduced use of both public benefits and healthcare. Currently, over **67,000** working-age people with disabilities in Wisconsin receive public benefits. [2012 Wisconsin Report at [www.disabilitystatistics.org](http://www.disabilitystatistics.org)]
* **Supporting people with disabilities to join Wisconsin’s workforce helps create more inclusive and welcoming communities for generations to come –** Enabling people with disabilities to participate in the workforce builds on Wisconsin’s commitment to inclusive education in public schools and embraces **the value of diversity** in our communities.

**What can you do to help Wisconsin become an Employment First state?**

* **Support Employment First Policy and Legislation in Wisconsin.** Make Wisconsin the 34th state to adopt a commitment to Employment First. Make **community employment earning at least minimum wage a priority outcome** for all people with disabilities in our state who receive publicly-funded services.
* **Support policies that assist youth with disabilities to transition from high school to integrated employment.** Support policies and public investments that ensure **youth with disabilities leave high school with a community job earning at least minimum wage** or access to post-secondary education leading to a successful career.
* **Create policy changes that re-balance existing public dollars to increase investments in services that support community employment.** Wisconsin currently invests most its long-term care resources in services and supports for people with disabilities to remain unemployed or in segregated, sub-minimum wage training programs. Employment First is about building publicly funded supports that **presume all people with disabilities are capable of working in the community next to the many other individuals participating in Wisconsin’s workforce.**
* **Sign on to the Employment First Coalition.** Be a member of the Wisconsin Employment First Coalition. Get progress reports and statewide and national updates. For more information go to the Wisconsin Employment First website at [www.wiemploymentfirst.com](http://www.wiemploymentfirst.com)

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| If you have any questions or would like get more involved in Wisconsin Employment First, contact Ann Sievert at [ann.sievert@wisconsin.gov](mailto:ann.sievert@wisconsin.gov) or 608-267-9897. |