



EMPLOYMENT FIRST - A GUIDE FOR SELF-ADVOCATES

A Definition of Employment First: Employment in the general workforce is the first and preferred outcome in the provision of publicly funded services for all working age citizens with disabilities, regardless of level of disability.

ABCs of Advocacy: Simple Ways You Can Make a Difference!



TAKE ACTION:

- Share Your Story!
- Take Your Legislator to Work!
- Visit your legislators

BELIEVING IN YOURSELF

BELIEVE IN YOURSELF:

- You Can Make a Difference!
- Know Your Rights
- What are your strengths and needs?



COMMUNICATE CLEARLY:

- What is important to you?
- How does a job affect your life?
- What are the benefits of working?

HOW TO FIND YOUR LEGISLATORS!

[Finding Your Senator](#)

[Finding State Legislators](#)



[Finding Your Representative](#)

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

There are many different communication strategies that you can use as a voice for Employment First. Choosing the most effective strategy or strategies will be important to be a successful advocate. Below are a few key approaches:

Email and Social Media

Electronic communications are an easy and time effective way to share your story and gain advocacy allies. More information about [“Using Social Media for Advocacy”](#)

Press Releases

A Press Release can provide your allies and general public a brief synopsis of important information. For detailed tip sheets and template press-releases, visit [pages 31-34 in this resource](#)

Newsletters, Opinion Pieces, Etc.

Other strategies to spread the APSE message and vision are through newsletters, op-eds and white papers. Please see [this helpful resource](#) for more information about these strategies (pages 40-42).

LEGISLATIVE STRATEGIES

Legislative advocacy is about making your voice heard and taking action that involves acting on behalf of yourself or others. Legislative advocacy can involve working personally with legislative staff to bombarding legislators with phone calls, letters and tweets about a particular issue. Legislative advocacy is not a one-time thing! In general, we recommend several different types of legislative advocacy when working with elected officials:

APSE Day at the Statehouse: Organizing an APSE Day at the Capitol is an effective way that a few APSE chapters have utilized to raise awareness and engage with stakeholders.

Take Your Legislator to Work Day: The objective of the Take Your Legislator to Work Day is to raise awareness about the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities and to show our legislators **“Real Jobs with Real Pay!”**

Meeting Policymakers: The most effective way to build connections with your legislators are to go on a personal visit to his or her office. Visit APSE’s [Legislative Advocacy Approaches Section](#) to learn how to schedule a visit.

Building and Working in Coalitions: For more information about working with and developing coalitions, review there information her on [Advocacy Tactics](#).

APSE FACT SHEETS

[APSE FACT SHEET: TRANSITION](#)

[APSE EMPLOYMENT FIRST STATEMENT](#)

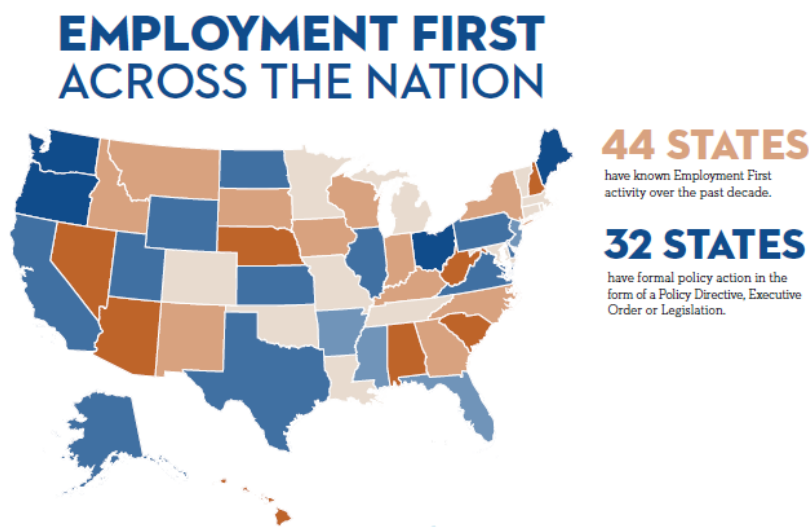
[APSE POSITION ON SUB-MINIMUM WAGE](#)

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Individuals with disabilities are protected from discrimination in employment primarily by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Rehabilitation Act. The ADA makes it unlawful to discriminate in employment against a qualified individual with a disability. This part of the ADA is enforced by the U.S. [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#) (EEOC) and State and local civil rights enforcement agencies.

Additionally, the Department of Labor’s [Civil Rights Center](#) (CRC) enforces the employment-related provisions of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. See the [Laws & Regulations](#) subtopic for specific information on these laws.

DO YOU LIVE IN AN EMPLOYMENT FIRST STATE?



WHO IS THIS RESOURCE FOR? Anyone who needs support to live, work and be an active member of your community. Finding employment takes WORK but strong self-advocacy skills are an essential part of helping you find a job that fits your skills and will lead you towards a career! Legislative advocacy is crucial in creating policies and practices that support regular jobs for regular pay to create a lifestyle that is self-determined and independent!



Authors: Eric Matthes, WA APSE Member, President of People First of Washington and Advocacy Coordinator at the Arc of King County and APSE Public Policy Associate Ryley Newport.