



## **Employment First Policy approved by the MN Olmstead Sub-Cabinet**

October 1, 2014

It is with great pleasure that MN APSE announces the approval of an Employment First Policy by the MN Olmstead Sub-Cabinet on September 29, 2014. The approval of this policy is culmination of years of collaboration, partnership, education, and dedication of a group of united around the idea that people with disabilities are just as valued and have the same rights as other citizens. The idea that employment should be the first option for working aged Minnesotans with disabilities was not always embraced, but today Minnesota stands on the doorstep of real and permanent change by making employment an option for all Minnesotans with disabilities.

This is Minnesota's Story: The End of the Beginning

On June 11, 2007, a group of more than 100 leaders representing government, education, community-based service providers, business, and disability advocacy organizations gathered in Chaska, Minnesota to begin planning a coordinated strategy to increase the competitive employment and economic development goals of Minnesotans with a wide array of disabilities.

The goals outlined in the summary report of the summit (later known as the Employment First Manifesto) were to:

- 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 and public policy for all Minnesotans living with disabilities.
- Launch "Communities of Practice" Demonstrations.
- Develop training & technical assistance resources to redirect and execute an Employment First vision.

Over 2000 copies of the Manifesto were printed and disseminated. In addition the Manifesto was downloaded over 10,000 times. Employment First was defined for the first time and this definition was used in nearly every other Employment First Policy or Executive Order around the country over the next 7 years.

The MN Employment First Coalition went on to host 4 more summits, 3 statewide conferences, and many more listening sessions, and they were the leaders in continuing the dialogue among Employment First Champions.

The MN Employment Training and Technical Assistance Center was founded in 2009 and has been providing training and technical assistance across the state of MN and in many other states ever since. In addition, part of at least two state funded grant projects included Employment Communities of Practice.

Thank you to the MN Employment First Coalition for making this once impossible dream a reality. Now the hard work of implementing this policy must begin.