



DIVISION OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES  
Olympia, Washington

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TITLE: COUNTY SERVICES FOR WORKING AGE ADULTS POLICY 4.11

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Authority: Chapter 71A RCW Developmental Disabilities  
Chapter 388-850-035 WAC Services – Developmental Disabilities

**BACKGROUND**

RCW 71A.10.015 states the Legislature “recognizes the state’s obligation to provide aid to persons with developmental disabilities through a uniform, coordinated system of services to enable them to achieve a greater measure of independence and fulfillment and to enjoy all rights and privileges under the Constitution and laws of the United States and the state of Washington.” The legislative intent can be accomplished by providing working age adults the supports needed to achieve gainful employment.

Washington has had much success in providing supported employment services to assist individuals with developmental disabilities in becoming gainfully employed. Gainful employment results in individuals with developmental disabilities earning typical wages and becoming less dependent on service systems. In addition, employment provides the rest of the community with the opportunity to experience the capabilities and contributions made by individuals with developmental disabilities.

In December 2000, the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) submitted the *Strategies for the Future Long-Range Plan Phase II Report* to the Washington State Legislature. This report includes the recommendations of the Stakeholder Workgroup regarding adult employment and day program services. The Stakeholder Workgroup recommended persons of working age should be gainfully employed, participating and contributing to community life, using a variety of strategies to reach this status in the community. Specifically, the report states:

“Pathways to Employment: Each individual will be supported to pursue his or her own unique path to work, a career, or his or her contribution to/participation in community life. All individuals, regardless of the challenge of their disability, will be afforded an opportunity to pursue competitive employment.”

**PURPOSE**

This policy establishes employment supports as the primary use of employment/day program funds for working age adults. The policy establishes guidelines for Case Resource Managers

(CRM) and Counties to follow when authorizing and offering services to working age adults.

### **SCOPE**

This policy applies to all DDD eligible working age adults who receive or seek employment and day program services; DDD Field Services staff; and Counties under contract with DDD and their subcontractors.

### **DEFINITIONS**

**Employment supports:** Services that support individuals to pursue or maintain gainful employment in integrated settings in the community. Key elements of these services include the following: 1) Supports are tailored to the needs, interests and abilities of the individual; and 2) All individuals receive supports to achieve and maintain integrated, gainful employment in their community.

**Gainful employment:** Employment that reflects achievement of or progress towards a living wage.

**Integrated settings:** Typical community settings not designed specifically for individuals with disabilities in which the majority of persons employed and participating are individuals without disabilities.

**Living wage:** The amount of earned wages needed to enable an individual to meet or exceed his or her living expenses.

**Maintain gainful employment:** Supports required to sustain gainful employment and increase earned income.

**Pursue gainful employment:** Employment or other activities that demonstrate steady movement toward gainful employment over time.

**Supported employment:** Paid, competitive employment for people who have severe disabilities and a demonstrated inability to gain and maintain traditional employment. Supported employment occurs in a variety of normal, integrated business environments.

Further, supported employment includes:

- Minimum wage pay or better;
- Support to obtain and maintain jobs; and
- Promotion of career development and workplace diversity.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Source: American Association on Mental Retardation Fact Sheet on Supported Employment, March 2001.

**Working age adult:** An adult between the ages of 21 and 62.

### **POLICY**

- A. Supports to pursue and maintain gainful employment in integrated settings in the community shall be the primary service option for working age adults. CRMs, in conjunction with County staff, will provide each DDD enrolled individual with information about the policy and be available to answer questions to assist individuals to understand the policy.
- B. Counties will develop and make available services that offer support for individuals to pursue or maintain gainful employment, including support and technical assistance to achieve integrated employment outcomes.
- C. DDD Field Services staff shall authorize services to working age adults that support the individual to pursue and maintain integrated, gainful employment. Services for persons under the age of 62 that do not emphasize the pursuit or maintenance of employment in integrated settings can be authorized only by exception to policy. Adults approaching retirement age, or over the age of 62, will continue to have the option of receiving support to pursue and maintain gainful employment.

### **PROCEDURES**

#### **A. New Working Age Adults**

- 1. Counties and Regions will negotiate contracts to ensure the availability of services consistent with this policy by July 1, 2006.
- 2. CRMs will provide individuals with information regarding services. CRMs may refer these individuals to Counties for additional assistance.
- 3. CRMs, in cooperation with Counties, will determine with individuals and family members if individuals would like to pursue or maintain gainful employment in an integrated setting in the community.
- 4. CRMs will authorize services for individuals who are seeking to pursue or maintain gainful employment.
- 5. If individuals of working age do not want to pursue or maintain gainful employment, then CRMs, in conjunction with County staff, will provide information about generic community services.
- 6. CRMs may authorize services that do not emphasize employment for working age adults only by exception to policy (ETP).

**B. Working Age Adults Currently Receiving Employment and Day Program Services**

1. Counties and Regions will negotiate contracts to ensure the availability of services consistent with this policy by July 1, 2006.
2. Case Resource Managers (CRMs), in cooperation with Counties, will determine with individuals and family members if individuals would like to pursue or maintain gainful employment in an integrated setting in the community.
3. Counties will work with service providers to ensure that by July 1, 2006, each individual shall be gainfully employed or have an employment plan, which reflects the goals needed to pursue or maintain gainful employment. Each individual shall receive supports needed to implement the plan.
4. CRMs will continue to authorize services for individuals who are pursuing or maintaining gainful employment.
5. Through July 1, 2006, CRMs may continue to authorize services for working age adults who are in the process of considering employment and developing an employment plan.
6. After discussions with CRMs and/or County staff, if individuals of working age do not want to pursue or maintain gainful employment, then the authorization of county services will be discontinued and CRMs will provide information about generic community services.
7. CRMs may continue to authorize services that do not emphasize employment only for individuals who have been granted an exception to policy (ETP).

**C. Review Function**

On a semi-annual basis through July 1, 2006, Counties will review service providers' progress towards ensuring that:

1. Services to working age adults are consistent with this policy;
2. Each participant is gainfully employed or has an employment plan; and
3. Each participant has received assistance and made progress on the plan.

The semi-annual progress reports will be submitted to the DDD regional offices.

**EXCEPTIONS**

Exceptions to this policy must have the prior written approval of the Regional Administrator based on County input.

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**SUPERSESSION**

None

Approved: /s/ Linda Rolfe  
Director, Division of Developmental Disabilities

Date: July 1, 2004