



Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council  
1706 E. Elm Street, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102  
573-751-8611/800-500-7878/573-526-2755 (FAX)  
*Sharon Williams, Chairperson* *Vicky Davidson, Executive Director*

[www.moddcouncil.org](http://www.moddcouncil.org)

Eric R. Greitens,  
Governor

## Competitive Employment

### **The Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council's Position:**

Everyone who identifies work as a goal is employable, with the right opportunities and support. Therefore, people with disabilities have the right to, and should, receive services and supports to help them prepare for and attain competitive employment: community-based jobs, working alongside people without disabilities, earning at least minimum wage.

### **The Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council's Reasons:**

Research has consistently demonstrated the benefits of employment for people with disabilities. For example, one study found that people with disabilities who worked were healthier, reported a higher quality of life, and had lower Medicaid and Medicare costs than those who were unemployed.<sup>1</sup>

A statewide commitment to integrated employment will increase individual and state revenue and decrease state spending. In Vermont, a comprehensive program focused on "person-centered planning, meaningful job matches, full inclusion in the workforce, and creative strategies that broaden employment opportunities" resulted in 48% of Vermonters receiving developmental disabilities supports attaining competitive employment, 2.5 times the national average.<sup>2</sup> In 2015, this program helped people earn and pay taxes on over \$5,000,000 in wages and saved the state an estimated \$1,700,000 in Social Security Disability payments.<sup>3</sup>

Missouri continues to lag behind in competitive employment opportunities and outcomes. In our most recent statewide Needs Assessment Survey, 71% of respondents said that opportunities for employment were inadequate or only fair.<sup>4</sup> Even worse, a recent study showed that only 8% of Missourians receiving developmental disabilities supports had a paid job in the community, less than half the national average, and only 23% had community employment as a goal in their service plans.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council's Recommendations:**

- As a state and society, we must acknowledge that competitive employment is a crucial component of community integration and ensure that people with disabilities have early access to and receive the support they need to obtain well-paid jobs providing meaningful opportunities for community and social engagement and advancement.
- Agencies supporting people with disabilities must presume and foster competence and employability including increasing outreach to people in sheltered workshops and other segregated settings so they can gain the opportunities and supports they need to attain competitive employment.
- Support plans, including Person Centered Plans, should include goals and objectives for competitive employment and clearly state the employment supports to be provided.
- Schools, in collaboration with other agencies supporting people with disabilities, should focus on helping transition-aged students in special education gain the skills they need to attain competitive employment, including career exploration, work skills and experiences, and a network of supportive individuals and organizations.
- Agencies supporting people with disabilities should develop collaborative relationships with private businesses and each other and implement coordinated strategies that enable competitive employment including coordinated service planning, job exploration, increased job training, and internship opportunities.
- Missouri state government should take the lead in developing and demonstrating best practices in competitive employment, including consulting with organizations and states, such as Vermont, that have created programs empowering people with disabilities to prepare for and attain competitive employment.
- Agencies supporting people with disabilities should provide information about and access to financial programs such as benefits planning and ABLE accounts<sup>6</sup> that can help people earn and save money without jeopardizing their receipt of public benefits.

## References

1. Hall, J. P., Kurth, N. K., & Hunt, S. L. (2013). Employment as a health determinant for working-age, dually-eligible people with disabilities. *Disability and Health Journal*, 6(2), 100-106.
2. The Zero Project. (2017). State-Wide, Long-Term Inclusion in the Open Labour Market. Available at: <https://zeroproject.org/policy/long-term-inclusion-in-the-open-labour-market-state-wide/>
3. The Vermont Department on Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living. (2017). The Vermont Developmental Services (DS) Supported Employment Program.
4. See, <http://moddcouncil.org/pageDownload.php?docID=455>
5. Human Services Research Institute and The National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services (2016). National Core Indicators Adult Consumer Survey Outcomes, Missouri Report. Available at: [http://www.nationalcoreindicators.org/upload/state-reports/2014-15\\_ACS\\_Missouri\\_Report.pdf](http://www.nationalcoreindicators.org/upload/state-reports/2014-15_ACS_Missouri_Report.pdf)
6. See, <http://www.ablenrc.org>

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