

It is CASE's view and experience that **Employment First** is essentially a 'best practice in disability services' statement with specific bearing on policy and services around Employment Inclusion.

Employment First simply states that Employment in the general workforce should be a preferred outcome for publicly funded services for working aged citizens with disabilities. This statement reflects policy and practice which supports inclusion, poverty reduction and normative opportunities wherein people with disabilities can contribute and demonstrate their value to the community. Within Employment First Principles (promoted most vocally by APSE – the Association of People Supporting Employment First), **Employment is defined as working in an integrated setting for at least minimum wage** (or legitimate self-employment). CASE concurs with these statements.

The potential for inclusion, poverty reduction, citizenship and Social Return on Investment is extremely apparent with employment inclusion services and policy. Employment First guided policy and practice supports and strengthens employment inclusion. It should be noted that a great number of Canadian Employment Inclusion Services have been self-directed to engage in best practices which reflect Employment First philosophy since prior to the movement's inception.

CASE Statement on Employment First: (Adapted from the APSE Statement)

As for Economic Participation, Inclusion and Value within Communities - **Employment in the general workforce, or self-employment, is the primary expected outcome for publicly funded services for working age citizens with disabilities.**

- The current low participation rate of citizens with disabilities in the workforce is unacceptable.
- Access to 'real jobs with real wages' is essential if citizens with disabilities are to avoid lives of poverty, dependence, and isolation.
- All working age people with disabilities* can make a valuable contribution to the Canadian labour market through integrated, equitably compensated employment within the general workforce, or through entrepreneurship or self-employment.
- People with disabilities have the right to be supported to pursue employment opportunities, and to earn a living wage in a job of their choosing, based on their talents, skills, and interests.
- Employees with disabilities require varying degrees of assistance and support to ensure job success and should have access to those supports as necessary to succeed in, and meet the needs of, the workplace.

- Inclusion or exclusion of the specific term 'Employment First' does not determine whether a public system or agency reflects Employment First principles. Such a determination can only be made in examining whether the policies, procedures, investment and infrastructure are designed for and ultimately result in increased integrated employment for people with disabilities.

** Where the degree of disability appears to prevent employment participation, we see this as an inability on the part of supports as yet to communicate on the required level with the person or an inability as yet to design a system of effective supports (human and / or technical) which allow the person to succeed. As such, continued investigation and work is required to facilitate normative outcomes.*