

The AMHTA Beneficiary Employment & Engagement Focus Area &  
the Governor's Council on Disabilities & Special Education Employment Programs

# “Implementing Employment First”

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“Employers have recognized for some time that it's smart business to have a diverse workforce - one in which many views are represented and everyone's talents are valued. Well, disability is part of diversity.”

Thomas Perez – U.S. Secretary of Labor





# What is 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” – Association of People Supporting Employment First
- Alaska law requires Departments of Education & Early Development, Labor & Workforce Development, and Health & Social Services to report annually to the Trust on progress made in implementing “Employment First” in their systems

# Employment First Implementation

- Summer 2013 – Council submits grant application which includes efforts to get an Employment First Bill passed
- Fall 2013 – Representative Charisse Millett begins work on an “Employment First” Bill
- January 2014 – Legislation introduced HB 211
- April 2014 – Joint CSHB 211 Passes unanimously



# Employment First Implementation

- May 2014 – Governor Parnell signs CSHB 211 into law
- September 2014 – Initial meetings with Department representatives and partners to determine next steps and annual reporting measures to the Trust
- October/November/December – Meetings with Directors, Commissioners, the Trust and the Governor's office





# Other Considerations for Employment First

- ✓ Opportunity to bring together all state entities on a unified employment services plan for people with disabilities
- ✓ Clear definitions for employment services, outcomes, and rate structures
- ✓ Common provider qualifications and standards across disability service systems

# Other Considerations for Employment First

- ✓ Statewide Ticket to Work Partnership
- ✓ Potential to partner with housing and transportation programs
- ✓ Opportunity for development of promising new programs (peer-to-peer supports, expansion of natural supports in all stages of life, social enterprise, etc.)

# Elements of a High-Performing Employment System

- ✓ Leadership
- ✓ Strategic Goals & Operating Policies
- ✓ Financing & Contracting Methods
- ✓ Training & Technical Assistance
- ✓ Interagency Collaboration & Partnership
- ✓ Services and Service Innovation
- ✓ Performance Measurement Data  
Management



**State Employment Leadership Network**



# Leadership

- “Champions” – Top to front-line
- Employment as an **expectation** for all
- Dedicated employment program staff
- Network of stakeholders continually works toward furthering employment efforts



# Strategic Goals and Operating Policies

- Employment First Legislation – CSHB 211
- Common definitions of “employment” and “employment services”
- Addressing employment is mandatory
- The “matrix” of services
- Transition services (MOU between agencies)



# Financing & Contracting Methods

- Funding supports employment services more than other services
- Seamless cooperation between Vocational Rehabilitation and Senior & Disability Services
- Provider qualifications and rates are similar across agencies/systems



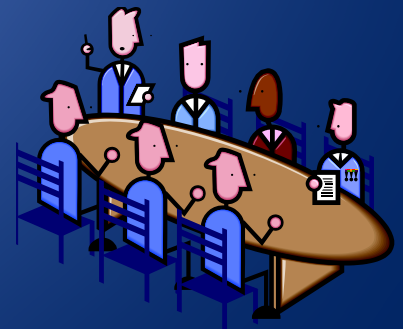
# Training & Technical Assistance

- Identify approved training and assist with funding staff to attend
- Agreed upon staff qualifications and competencies across agencies
- Assist agencies with transitioning to more employment programs and services
- Statewide “Employment Institute”?



# Interagency Collaboration & Partnership

- Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority Employment Workgroup
- May 2014 Trust Employment Stakeholder Meeting
- Interagency Memorandums of Agreement
- “Deeming” of Provider services
- Developing “seamless” transition between agencies
- Employer Engagement & Partnership





# Services & Service Innovation

- Access to benefits, work incentives, and financial counseling
- Expansion of employment options in State services including self-employment & subsistence
- Development of clear service definitions
- Development of policies and strategies for flexible support models



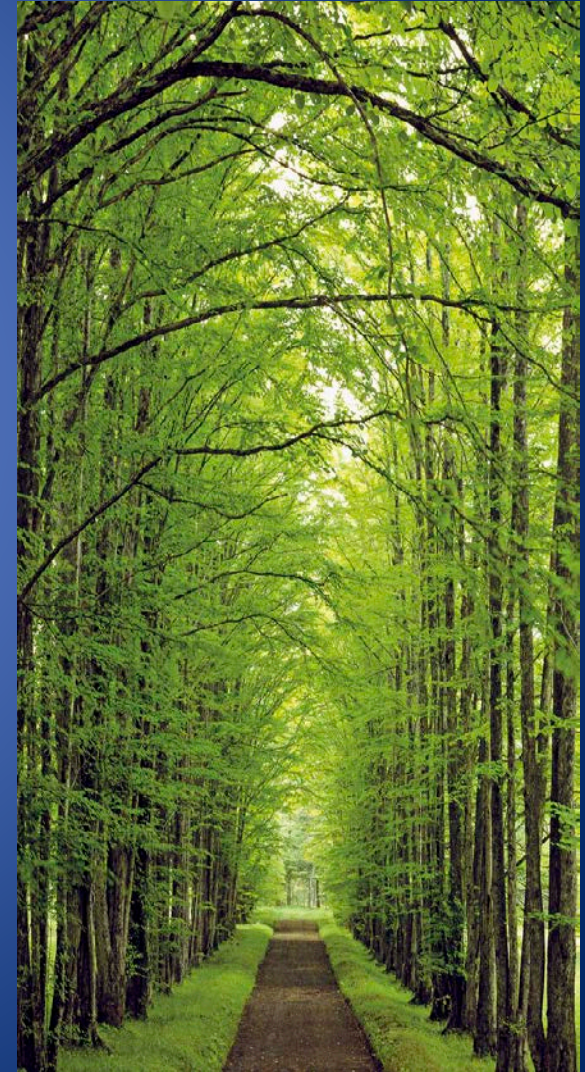
# Performance Measurement & Data Management

- Establish core set of data
- Implement core data across systems
- Establish definition of “employment outcome” across systems
- Assist the Department of Education & Early Development with expansion of Indicator 14 measures to support Employment First efforts



# Path to Success

- Leadership
- Agreed-upon goals
- Aligned policies
- Funding supports employment
- Quality provider/staff training
- Ongoing technical assistance
- Strong partnerships
- Innovative services
- Collaborative data systems





# Next Steps

- Trust Stakeholder Workgroup
- Strategic plan
- Meet with state leadership
- Quantify “progress”
- Provide technical assistance
- Convene Employment First Committee
- Develop agreed-upon and aligned policy & regulations

# Questions / Discussion

