



**EXECUTIVE ORDER**

IN THE OFFICE OF  
SECRETARY OF STATE  
14-08

**EXECUTIVE ORDER IMPLEMENTING EMPLOYMENT FIRST IN ILLINOIS**

**WHEREAS**, the Illinois Employment First Act (20 ILCS 40 et. seq) requires that State agencies follow and implement the State’s policy of competitive and integrated employment as the first option when serving persons with disabilities of working age, regardless of level of disability, (the “Employment First Policy”); and

**WHEREAS**, the Employment First Policy applies to State-funded and/or operated programs and services that provide supports to help persons with disabilities obtain private employment; and

**WHEREAS**, the Illinois Employment First Act requires all State agencies that provide such services to follow the Employment First Policy and ensure that it is effectively implemented in their programs/services; and

**WHEREAS**, access to education and training opportunities that lead to gainful employment in demand occupations within the business community is key to economic and community progress; and

**WHEREAS**, the Employment First Policy will support individuals with disabilities who have the right and deserve the opportunity to make informed decisions about where they work and to obtain community integrated and competitive employment with appropriate integrated and collaborative supports to pursue better earnings, benefits, health status and quality of life; and

**WHEREAS**, current labor participation rates for people with disabilities is 32.4% compared with 70.5% for people without disabilities (American Community Survey, BLS, 2011), a disparity which establishes the need for governmental intervention to achieve the goal of the Illinois Employment First Policy by providing integrated, braided and collaborative services to individuals with disabilities; and

**WHEREAS**, persons with disabilities experience the highest rate of poverty in the country at 28.0%, compared with the national average of 15.0% (American Community Survey, BLS, 2011); and

**WHEREAS**, the State of Illinois has taken significant steps, including closing outdated institutions and embracing a model of community supports and services, to ensure Illinois is a state where all people with disabilities—regardless of the challenges they face—have the opportunity to achieve the goals of integrated community living and employment; and

**WHEREAS**, integrated employment through Employment First occurs when all employees are compensated by their employers at least at a minimum or prevailing wage, with equal benefits and opportunities to interact fully and with non-disabled co workers; and

**WHEREAS**, the State of Illinois recognized the need for changes to the employment services provided to people with disabilities in Illinois and through legislation (codified at 20 ILCS 4095 et. seq) established *The Employment and Economic Opportunity for Persons with Disabilities Task Force* in 2009 (the “Task Force”), which is responsible for reviewing and analyzing:

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- 1) programs and policies of the State to determine what changes, modifications, and innovations may be necessary to remove barriers to competitive employment and economic opportunity for persons with disabilities including barriers such as training capacity, transportation, housing, program accessibility, and benefit structure;
- 2) State disability systems, including the mental health, developmental disabilities, veterans' assistance, workforce investment, and rehabilitation services systems, and their effect on employment of persons with disabilities; and
- 3) applicable research and policy studies, innovations used in other states, and any federal policy initiatives such as work experience, customized employment, on-the-job training, and federal funding opportunities that would increase competitive employment and economic opportunity for persons with disabilities in Illinois; and

**WHEREAS**, a statewide multi-agency integrated program intended to provide individualized employment-focused services and connections to integrated private employment opportunities can improve the status of adults with disabilities as contributing members of society and reduce their dependency on other publicly-funded programs; and

**WHEREAS**, the State of Illinois has committed to improving state-agency coordination efforts that will increase integrated community employment outcomes for working-age Illinoisans with disabilities;

**THEREFORE**, I, Pat Quinn, Governor of the State of Illinois, pursuant to the supreme executive authority vested in me by Article V, Section 8 of the Illinois Constitution, hereby order as follows:

#### **I. LIAISON**

An Employment First Liaison (the "Liaison") shall be appointed within the Office of the Governor to implement Illinois' Employment First Policy, in conjunction with the Task Force and State Agencies, as defined below.

#### **II. PURPOSE**

1. The Liaison's goal and purpose shall be the implementation of the Employment First Policy, which seeks to facilitate the full inclusion and integration of individuals with disabilities in the workplace. The Liaison shall work with the following entities (together the "Parties") to develop a preliminary five-year plan (the "Preliminary Plan") and a final plan (the "Final Plan") to improve community integrated private employment outcomes for people with disabilities:
  - a. the Task Force; and
  - b. State agencies that have State programs and services that provide supports to help persons with disabilities obtain employment in the private sector ("State Agencies") including, but not limited to, the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, the Illinois Department of Employment Security, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Central Management Services, the Department of Labor, the State Board of Education, the Department of Veterans' Affairs, the Department of Healthcare and Family Services, the Illinois Board of Higher Education, the Illinois Community College Board, and the Council on Developmental Disabilities.
2. The Parties shall take the following into consideration when developing the Preliminary Plan and the Final Plan:
  - a. How to align policies, financing, incentives, procedures, eligibility, enrollment and planning for services and supports for individuals with disabilities with the objective of increasing opportunities for informed choice community integrated employment;
  - b. How to maximize funding to support employment-related initiatives, including the state and federal funding currently available through the State's five year rebalancing efforts;

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- c. How to ensure individualized, conflict-free, informed choice about employment options, incorporating family members and other representatives of the person as appropriate;
  - d. Best practices and evidence-based practices for successful placement in integrated community employment and opportunities to implement or expand model programs;
  - e. Consistent with the National Governor's Association "A Better Bottom Line: Employment Individuals with Disabilities" a blueprint for increasing employment of persons with disabilities, agencies shall identify:
    - i. Effective strategies for partnerships, including with employers, foundations, advocates and other entities committed to creating integrated community employment opportunities and;
    - ii. Effective strategies for recruiting businesses to hire people with disabilities based on their capabilities, interests and strengths;
  - f. Opportunities for shared services among existing providers of services, including employment services, for people with disabilities;
  - g. How to enhance existing state technology to create a cross-agency point of access to document and track the outcomes of persons with disabilities employed in private integrated settings; and
  - h. Appropriate benchmarks for improving employment outcomes that increase system-wide accountability and transparency.
3. The Preliminary Plan shall be submitted to the Governor on or before December 31, 2014 and shall include strategies for:
- a. Improving services and supports necessary to make disability employment part of the state workforce development strategy, prioritize integrated employment as the first option for people with disabilities, and increase integrated community employment;
  - b. Identifying and implementing policy changes to align with the goals of Employment First;
  - c. Finding and supporting businesses in their efforts to employ people with disabilities;
  - d. Transition planning and services in full compliance with applicable federal and State laws and regulations, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Illinois School Code which prepare youth with disabilities for careers that use their full potential, including early career awareness and work experience; Creating the necessary infrastructure to accomplish these goals; and
  - e. Establishing benchmarks and collecting data to track employment outcomes.
4. The Final Plan shall be submitted to the Governor on or before June 30, 2015 and shall also include:
- a. Strategies for providing capacity building (e.g. provider training, workforce training, technical assistance, etc.) to all stakeholders and providers (including the Task Force);
  - b. The short term and long term cost of implementing the necessary changes in policy, practices and procedures and how these costs will be addressed by State Agencies;
  - c. Strategies for reducing the reliance upon vocational placements of people with disabilities in sheltered workshop settings, segregated settings and day treatment settings;
  - d. The interagency agreements, where needed, in collaboration with the Governor's Office Liaison to improve coordination of services and allow for data sharing as appropriate;

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- e. The agency benchmarks; and
- f. A plan detailing how State Agencies will work with IDES and DCEO to increase recruitment opportunities for individuals with disabilities with private employers.

### III. ALIGNMENT OF STATE PROCUREMENT WITH EMPLOYMENT FIRST

CMS shall review policies and procedures associated with statutory programs including the State Use Program and Business Enterprise Program as it applies to persons with disabilities and make changes as needed to ensure that they are in alignment with Employment First.

### IV. ANNUAL REPORTING

State Agencies shall, beginning December 1, 2015 and annually thereafter, report on their progress toward meeting the benchmarks established in the Final Plan to the Governor, the Liaison and the Task Force.

### V. OVERSIGHT

Oversight of the Final Plan shall be provided by the Liaison in collaboration with the Task Force. Such oversight shall include, but is not limited to, monitoring the progress of State Agencies towards meeting the goals and objectives established for such agencies in the Final Plan

### VI. SAVINGS CLAUSE

Nothing in this Executive Order shall be construed to contravene any state or federal law.

### VII. SEVERABILITY

If any provision of this Executive Order or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid by any court of competent jurisdiction, this invalidity does not affect any other provision or application of this Executive Order which can be given effect without the invalid provision or application. To achieve this purpose, the provisions of this Executive Order are declared to be severable.

### VIII. EFFECTIVE DATE

This Executive Order shall take effect immediately upon filing with the Secretary of State.

  
Pat Quinn, Governor

Issued by Governor: June 3, 2014  
Filed with Secretary of State: June 3, 2014