



State Employment Leadership Network

Our Vision for Employment

New to the SELN? Want a refresher on what we're all about? Let's get back to the basics. Here's our project team's vision about what employment should look like. We support you, our SELN members, to help make this vision a reality for the people whom your agencies and partners serve.

Employment is a path to opportunity.

Like everyone else, many people with intellectual and developmental disabilities want an opportunity to do paid work. They want and need to contribute to the economy, and to their communities. They're hungry for their skills and talents to be recognized and valued. They want a chance to give back, without being restricted to publicly funded services.

Your state's employment system stands behind people as they struggle, succeed, fail, and succeed again—just as we all do. And our project team stands behind you, as your state and local systems adapt to changing expectations, and find new ways to meet employment goals.

Employment connects people.

When employment's working well, people get jobs that match their interests, and gain a whole new personal and professional network. They build relationships with coworkers, and get more control over their own destiny.

Employees with disabilities may learn new things about themselves and grow personally. This may also lead to seeking a particular career path, or changing jobs to find new challenges, improving who they are, learning who they want to be, and engaging in their community.

Employment means equity.

At its core, **employment** for us simply means a person working at an individual job in a local business, as part of the general workforce, earning the prevailing wage. All employees are on the business's payroll, and everyone gets paid the same way. Finally, everyone gets the supports and accommodations they need to thrive in their roles.

Employment means increased economic opportunity.

Earning wages at and above minimum wages provides opportunity for individuals to become more financially self-sufficient, to build assets, and to lead more independent lives.

That's not to say these goals come easily. You know that from interacting with families, individuals, and staff walking out onto the front lines every day. Funding streams shift, acronyms come and go, laws change, and it gets harder to fight the good fight.

But through your work, and the energy and tenacity of the people you serve, we're all getting closer, day by day, to making this vision of employment into a reality.



The SELN is a joint program of the Institute for Community Inclusion at UMass Boston and the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services.

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