

Employment in Washington State

2010 Report





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was organized by the Washington Initiative for Supported Employment (W.i.S.e.) with the assistance of those listed below. It summarizes the best of our history and reflects the dedication and commitment of countless people over 30+ years. The most recent input is from over 600 participants at six regional forums held throughout the state in the spring of 2010 with the assistance of local county hosts.

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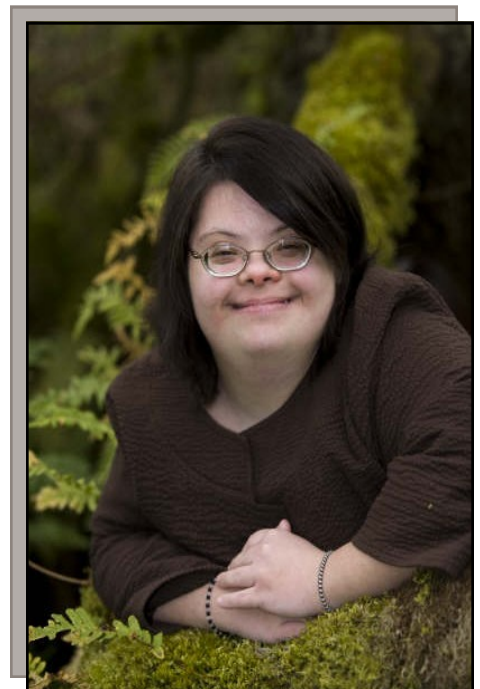
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Sarah graduated from the Lake Stevens School District with a great job as an office assistant at the Northwest Weight Loss Surgery Clinic.



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Our Challenge

3,000 New Jobs by 2015 We'll *See* it As We *Believe* it

In August 2009, the Alliance for Full Participation, composed of teams from states nationwide dedicated to quality of life through employment, set a national goal of doubling the number of people with developmental disabilities employed in real jobs by 2015. During 2009, people earning wages in individual community jobs in the State of Washington numbered 3,000. Our goal for the State of Washington by 2015 is an additional 3,000 current jobseekers employed.

What are our chances of success? *Our history says it's possible.*



The Policy

Developed in 2004, with implementation beginning in 2006, Washington's [Working Age Adult Policy](#) was the first “employment first policy” established in the country. Built upon the community values and practices of more than three decades, the policy firmly establishes employment as the primary goal and establishes employment supports as the primary use of program funds for all persons with developmental disabilities of working age. Since its implementation other states have looked to Washington State for leadership and guidance, using us as a model as they define their priorities of services and resource investment.

Guiding the use of funds to support working age adults regardless of disability, the policy establishes the pursuit of employment and a living wage as the goal. Benchmarks include typical community workplaces, minimum wage or better, gainful employment and career development.

While bold in its implications the policy represents a logical step for our state, continuing us on a path that began over 35 years ago. Throughout that time the journey has been driven by a clear vision that challenged those connected to the pursuit of a better life for **all** people with developmental disabilities. The policy established an important standard for our state—**all means all**.



“My name is Addison. I am employed at Harrison Medical Center, where I work in the rehabilitation facility.”

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How Did We Begin?

In looking back to the decade between 1970 and 1980 we can trace the underpinnings of our current employment infra-structure and philosophy to four significant “events”. They stand out as important foundational examples, *each playing a different but critical role in our development:*

- Education for All Handicapped Children Act
- Establishment of county government as a partner to the state
- PASS Training
- [County Guidelines](#)

While certainly not alone in their importance to who we are today, each of these early influences and experiences represents a critical aspect of a community service system determined to support and nurture people in their quest for employment.

The Spirit



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Signing of HB 90 in 1971, l to r: Janet Taggart, Katie Dolan, Cecile Linquist, Governor Daniel Evans, Evelyn Chapman, and George Breck

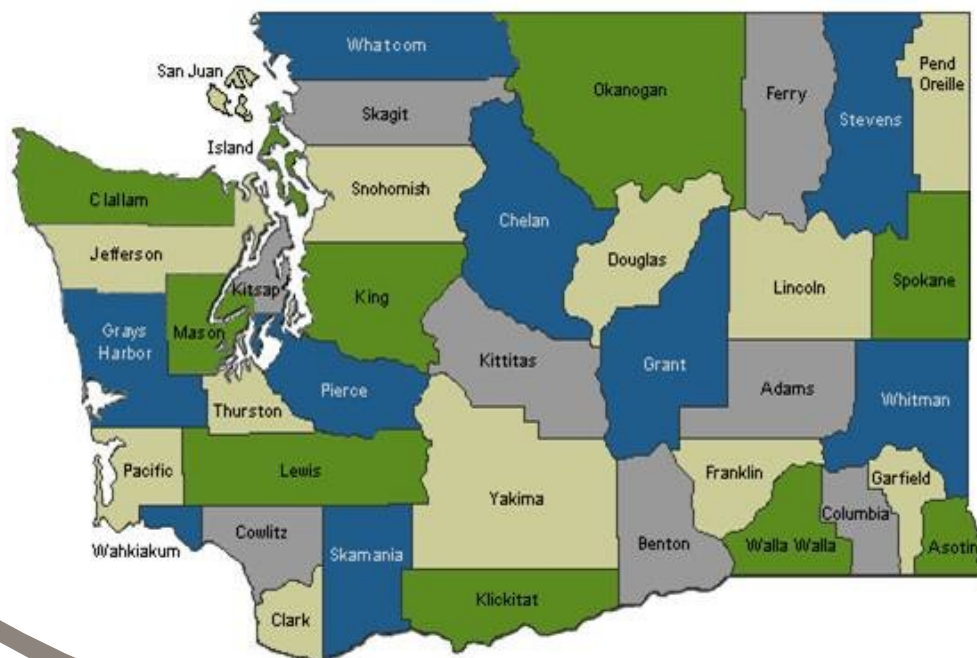
In the late 1960's and early 1970's while activist parents in Washington State as well as nationwide were banding together to advocate for and organize day programs for their adult children, a small group of Puget Sound parents had their goals set even higher. They were on a mission to change state and federal public policy that excluded children with developmental disabilities from attending public schools. With the passage of HB 90 in 1971 their efforts were rewarded when Washington became the first state to mandate legislation giving *all* children the right to free public education. And then in July 1975 with Washington as its model, Congress passed

Public Law 94-142 directing states to provide free public education for all students if they were to receive federal funding.

Having children with disabilities become an integral part of community life through presence and participation in public schools sent a powerful message about the value of all children and their place in the community especially in our state. The pioneer energy and spirit of these parents had established a precedent for those focused on employment just a few years later.

Structure

Much of the community service system was established in the mid-1970's, following the 1968 policy establishing counties as the state's partner in developing and overseeing community services. County government was given responsibility to develop and oversee day programs for children not yet of school age and for young adults over age 21. Over the years Washington's advancement around employment is due in large part to the leadership resulting from the state-county relationship. For over three decades that partnership has been based on the mutual respect for a more intimate knowledge of local resources and opportunities; the capacity to pool and leverage state and county funding to have the greatest impact; the ability to plan, create and invest in best practices tailored to local needs; and the ongoing contractual oversight of support providers. The creation, sustenance and improved quality of local organizations providing employment support have been due to county efforts over more than three decades.



Inspiration

There is little doubt that from early on in the late 1970's Washington state and local leaders have sought out the best ideas available to complement and support the energy and passion that were already forming in our young community system. In 1978 those state and local leaders were introduced to PASS (Program Analysis of Service Systems), a values-based way of evaluating and examining how community services and supports were organized and implemented. Based on principles of normalization as outlined by Sweden's Wolf Wolfensberger and introduced by John and Connie Lyle O'Brien, the week-long PASS experience gave the initial 45 participants a common approach to what typical community life could look like for people with developmental disabilities. The depth of the analysis crystallized the values that were already becoming established in the hearts and minds of those involved in the training. The PASS workshops continued across the state and articulated a vision for working age adults that included paid jobs in typical community settings as part of valued community lives, and gave further direction to those looking to build a solid foundation of respectful community support.

Values

The publication of the [County Guidelines](#) in the early 1980's established the first and clearest policy regarding the purpose, direction, and content of community day programs for adults. Based on the data and experiences of pioneers like Marc Gold, Tom Bellamy, Paul Wehman, and Jim Moss, the state of Washington formally established typical community employment as the primary outcome for adults, and through the guidelines, supported counties to pursue local programs that invested in that outcome. The state and counties revised the guidelines in 1992, further articulating the values that had been guiding their contracts, training and technical assistance around community employment: **Power and Choice, Relationships, Status/Contribution, Integration, Competence, and Health and Safety**. In the early 80's these values had sparked the establishment of new individual employment options for adults and in 1992 they continued to serve as a clear guide to existing programs in their evolution and development. Today, they are the essence and foundation of the Working Age Adult Policy.

What Got Us Here?

Factors that were essential in furthering progress to support people with developmental disabilities to move out of poverty and into good paying jobs can be categorized in three major areas: *gathering on a regular basis, the development of powerful leaders, and holding ourselves accountable*. The practices in these three areas helped us to “stay on the same page” while creating an environment conducive to change and growth.

Gathering as a community

For over thirty years it has all been about relationships and the intentional creation of opportunities, formal and informal, that bring us together to remind us what we’re all about. The best example is the **Ellensburg Employment Conference**. First held in 1978, the annual conference is the oldest employment conference in the country, serving a special role in our state for those connected to the advancement of employment for adults with developmental disabilities. Due to budget restrictions, the conference was suspended in 2009 and 2010. From its inception the conference offered presentations about the best programs nationally and statewide, giving participants the most powerful inspiration and information available to guide their work. Unique to the annual gathering is an anticipated sense of community and celebration. The estimated 13,000 participants over 30 years included advocates, self-advocates, employment specialists, state and county bureaucrats, teachers, employers, and elected officials. Among them were those new to the work, that got to hear *about* the best *from* the best and were welcomed into an expanding community focused on employment and full participation.

Annual statewide and regional forums focused on employment-related issues bring stakeholders together to identify and confront what is standing in the way of employment for more people. Over time these discussions have focused on policies, attitudes, innovation, skills, and collaboration—whatever we can and do less of to advance the possibility of community employment. It has often been through these challenging discussions that the ingredients for future growth and change have emerged, good relationships are formed and solidified, and a mutual respect for people’s roles and contributions is reinforced.



The ongoing availability of training and technical assistance

has been the glue that has held together the vision, the values, and the practices for our expanding community focused on employment. In the mold of the Ellensburg Conference, national and local “experts”—those who have something to teach us—are made available to regions, organizations, and sometimes individuals, responding to needs and helping us all get better at what we do. Any good ideas considered helpful in the effort to promote more and better jobs are shared. These learning opportunities have been part of our collective practice for all 30 years, especially integral to our ongoing efforts to create opportunities for individuals with more significant challenges.

Developing leaders

Creating and supporting people in jobs only happens in an environment that has leadership at every level—state and local, public and private. We have been intentional in identifying, nurturing and supporting leaders in every domain, including advocates and self-advocates, bureaucrats and employers, teachers, support providers, and elected officials—anyone interested in taking a leadership role in the realm of employment. When those leaders come together they anchor our shared values and goals in a set of common experiences. And when they return to their work and advocacy, their leadership is strengthened as they continue to hold the vision.

Families focused on valued lives for their children have organized into powerful parent coalitions across the state, articulate and effective in communicating their dreams and goals. *Self-advocates*, anxious to speak on their own behalf, continue to discover their voice, no longer settling for exclusion, isolation and poverty. Several *employers* have taken a leadership role, beyond creating and providing job opportunities. Their participation at forums and conferences have afforded employers the opportunity to teach and learn, strengthening the partnership with employment support organizations. Their presence and leadership on the team reinforces the value of our work and furthers the collective effort to create welcoming workplaces.

Matt works at Seattle Children’s Hospital as an administrative assistant for three programs: Neurodevelopmental, Endocrinology and Genetics.

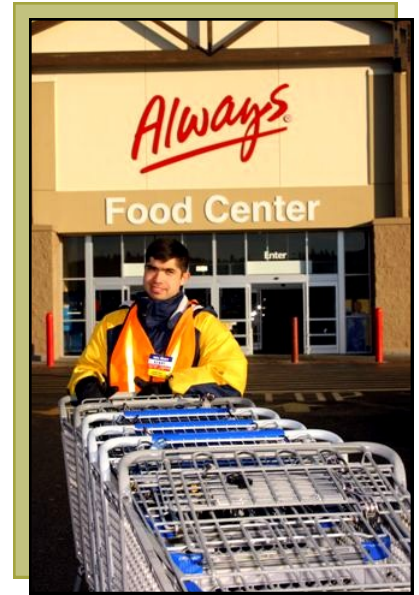
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Kenny working at a Walmart in Spokane.

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For the past 10 years we have especially focused time, resources and energy on *emerging leaders*, primarily younger people with the dedication and commitment to employment who will be able to carry on and build upon past accomplishment. With an eye on sustainability mentoring relationships are evolving, built on our history and values while clearly focused on present realities and future possibilities.



Holding ourselves accountable

The clear goal of 3,000 additional people working in individual jobs for a total of 6,000 by 2015 is our latest challenge, easily tracked with our statewide data collection system that has been in place since the mid-1980's. With a priority of accountability for the public investment in employment supports for persons with developmental disabilities, we have been continually aware of our progress through good and bad economies, measuring job gains and losses, hours worked, wages, and public benefit ratios. Knowing this information at the provider, county and state levels has given further clarity to our overall purpose, while letting us know how we're doing. While it is the foundation of county planning and service provider contracts, the data also creates a cohesiveness around our collective responsibility, sharpens the visibility of our work, and broadcasts the value and contribution of our efforts.



Wayne Harris, Manager, Gig Harbor Costco Wholesale, "We find that these individuals are tremendously reliable, always available for work, and very rarely sick. They come in and are very focused on the job at hand, and overall it's a win."

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Where Are We Now?

Over the five years since the introduction of the Working Age Adult Policy, discussions and actions have focused on the personal and collective leadership required of all of us to make inclusive communities a reality.

Several organizations have eliminated or are in the process of eliminating their sheltered workshop programs. Formal and informal networks of employers and employment organizations are collaborating to hire and maintain good employees. Two former service provider organizations, Rehabilitation Enterprises of Washington and Partnership 2020, have combined to form the Community Employment Alliance, (www.communityemploymentalliance.org), a single powerful statewide force advocating with one voice for community jobs for people with developmental disabilities. In addition, the new [APSE](#) WA Chapter is forming as an affiliate of CEA connecting national efforts to statewide efforts. Stakeholders at conferences and regional forums are consistently challenging each other about what it will take to move forward and create more job opportunities, especially for people with significant barriers to employment.

Public sector employment

In 1990 the King County Council set a tone and laid the foundation for employment in the public sector in Washington State that would eventually be an example for the rest of the country. With the cooperation of their employees' union, King County committed to developing county jobs designed for individuals with developmental disabilities. Beyond the initial opportunities, the policy established a precedent within county government for further job development, demonstrated the potential labor-management cooperation in job creation, and set a standard of responsibility for the public sector employers in Washington State and beyond.

Larry has worked at King County Metro as a Rider Information Specialist full time for 17 years.

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What followed were efforts at the City of Seattle to make similar commitments and eventually other Washington counties, cities, universities, and school districts began considering ways to include people with developmental disabilities in their work forces. And in 1997 through legislative leadership and the advocacy of employment advocates, Governor Gary Locke signed legislation creating a policy that facilitated the hiring of people with developmental disabilities in state jobs. By early 2007 there were 60 individuals working for King County, 45 for the City of Seattle, and over 100 in state government as well as in other public sector jobs across the state.

“People with disabilities are a very important part of our diversity as a country and to ignore them is not only counterproductive in the workplace, it also makes no sense in the marketplace.” **Neil Romano, Former Assistant Secretary, U.S. Department of Labor, keynote at HireAbility Day 2010, Spokane**



2010 Legislature

In March 2010, in the midst of a deep recession, the Washington State Legislature passed and the Governor signed a biennial budget allocating \$6.4 million to invest in job creation for over 1,000 young people with developmental disabilities that completed high school in 2009 and 2010. This forward-thinking move said a lot.

- It epitomized the value of 18 years of investment in special education for these young adults.
- It reflected the need and desire of the community to support people in getting jobs and keeping them.
- It said that as we struggle out of a deep recession, the recovery will include and rely on *all of us*.

Agency Collaboration

While the state Division of Developmental Disabilities has historically taken a leadership role on behalf of its clients, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation has been a partner from early on. DVR supported several of the early pilot projects in the early 1980's with start-up funding, helping newly-formed organizations demonstrate that people with significant challenges could work in community jobs. That cooperative funding arrangement with DDD through the counties became a model nationally for the federally-funded state employment initiatives five years later, featuring the combination of DVR's shorter-term investment in evaluation, job placement and training, with DDD's commitment to long-term support. That arrangement remains today.

The DDD-DVR relationship continued in the oversight of the Washington Supported Employment Initiative from 1986-1991, the federal systems-change grant to our state that featured employer leadership and eventually evolved into the Washington Initiative for Supported Employment (W.i.S.e.). While the Initiative is now a non-profit organization providing technical assistance and training statewide on behalf of DDD and the counties, DVR continues to play a critical role by investing in these efforts and encouraging staff to participate in regional trainings and forums throughout the state. The development of cooperative employment opportunities and the shared leadership required to advance those opportunities continue to be a priority for DVR.

The Private Sector

Private sector employers, both large and small, remain the backbone of our efforts to employ people with disabilities. Over the decades they have led the way and grown along with the rest of us in the efforts to seek new and better ways to hire and keep employees. Today's employers are more apt to have attended school with classmates with disabilities in their classes. With growing numbers of people working and contributing in public settings, hiring someone who happens to have some obvious challenges is becoming a more typical part of their human resource efforts. Over time, the increased flexibility of employers has also led to improved arrangements that accommodate the needs of the employee while enhancing the requirements of the workplace. In numerous instances a willingness to hire someone with a disability has led to an analysis of workplace flow, re-allocation of tasks and responsibilities

and the creation of new opportunities and greater efficiency. We have learned from employers that the immediate involvement of coworkers in the training of the new employee maximizes the skilled services of the agency and creates a more lasting investment in the coworkers and the culture of the workplace. As we collectively advocate for increased opportunities for people with disabilities in the work force, we are taking our lead from employers who recognize the intrinsic value of employees with disabilities—their inclusion makes good business sense, it enriches the workplace environment, and there is an invaluable contribution to the quality of life and well-being of the community.

Employers “get it”...

It makes as much business sense to hire a person with a developmental disability as it does to hire anyone else if they are qualified to do the job.”

Deb Ferguson, The Buzz and BeeDazzled, Sequim

“It is a tremendous success for both the individuals and the employer.”

Peggy Mangiaracina, Executive Director, Sacred Heart Children’s Hospital, Spokane

“To be honest, when I look at Liz I don’t see someone with a disability, I see somebody with a great deal of ability... Liz is very much an integral part of the utility.” ***Matt McCudden, Director of Customer and Communication Services, Clark Public Utilities, Vancouver***

“I can set my watch on him being here. He’s pulling his weight.”
Sean Schwender, Facility Manager, Washington Square, Bellevue

“It’s also created a culture of diversity in our stores which is an advantage over our competitors.”
Peter M. Ogg, Operating Partner, Papa John’s Pizza, Puyallup

“It’s been a great thing for our business and for me personally as well.”
Matt Storey, President, Direct Interactions, Seattle

[WATCH THE SEVEN WA EMPLOYERS VIDEO](#)

[WATCH THE GREAT HIRES! VIDEO](#)

Washingtonians with developmental disabilities in individual jobs earned over \$24 million in wages in 2009.

Self-employment

As in the broader employment arena some individuals in Washington have chosen to start their own businesses. Operating as micro-enterprises these opportunities offer another choice to people for whom typical employment is not currently a viable option. Geographic location, complex support needs, or personal skills and talents are among the reasons why some individuals are drawn to business ownership.

There are currently more than 40 people statewide who have established themselves as “entrepreneurs” in their communities, involved in the making, promotion and selling of products they have created or in the promotion and selling of their services. Most have been assisted with a business plan, and they have, along with their families/advocates, received some small business consultation. Support is provided through community organizations as it would be provided to employers. In the micro-enterprise approach, there is typically additional support needed from friends, families, and advocates. For people with developmental disabilities a key element of self-employment is that the business being pursued creates ongoing opportunities for the individual to be present and participating with others in the community.

Jeff, once considered ‘unemployable’, now works at his own business Doc Destruction supported by Highline Community College and his family

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Where Are We Going?

Community Leadership

Daunting even in the best of times, the pursuit of an additional 3,000 jobs in the near term will be affected by the uncertainty of the economy and the reliability of government funding. Both factors are always present but are not excuses for avoiding the challenge. With the current reduction in government funding affecting the capacity of the service system infrastructure, the leadership effort for innovation and job creation clearly rests with families, schools, and community networks.

Beyond the economic challenges, continued job opportunities in the next several years will fundamentally rely on a deeper expectation that younger people with disabilities *should be active in their communities and an integral part of the workplace*. Success at that level starts with families and schools that continue to expect a life of quality, participation and contribution. It will build upon a continued strong effort of employment support providers to seek broader community leadership in the job development effort—moving from the primary responsibility of a few to a shared responsibility of families, friends, and community advocates. Ultimately, success will be defined when individuals with developmental disabilities expect to get a job, and when employers expect to include employees with disabilities in their workplaces and take a leadership role in their inclusion and accommodation.



[Click to learn more](#)

Mark Sjolund, Manager, Bellevue Dunn Lumber, *“From a business perspective I would say the investment is relatively low but the return is extremely high.”*

JOB DEVELOPMENT

Be bolder and even more creative in identifying jobs. Challenge ourselves and our employer colleagues to explore new possibilities in the workplace, creating new ways for people to add value. Continue to re-think and evolve our business model.

- Pursue the Human Resources approach of [Project Search](#) that focuses on businesses looking to actively include people with disabilities in their work force.
- Facilitate employers as job creators and developers like [Rotary's Partners for Work](#).
- Engage satisfied and enthusiastic local employers as advocates and spokespersons in educational presentations to Chambers of Commerce and other civic groups.
- Consider a cost analysis/ benefits analysis presentation in promoting employment to specific businesses.
- Pursue the self-employment business model with individuals when it is a viable alternative.
- Expect young adults with developmental disabilities to begin working at the same age as their peers, and pursue typical leads to first jobs – through family networks, neighbors, school assistance and friends.
- Expand personal networks and job leads through social media, posting portfolios, resumes, stated job interests and career aspirations.
- Encourage young adults to clearly state job goals and pursue Career and Technical curriculum opportunities as part of their Individual Education Plans.



Ryan in a practice interview with Kent Rotarians

TRAINING & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Protect our long-term investment by identifying and promoting good ideas through training and technical assistance. Host forums to share knowledge and skills and disseminate best practices.

- Create gatherings similar to our issues forums at a local level to encourage broader involvement and test the level of commitment.
- Re-introduce the annual Ellensburg Employment Conference to reinforce the spirit and energy of an inclusive community. Expand the participants beyond the developmental disabilities community.
- Continue gathering at regional and local forums to develop and implement strategies for reaching the state's employment goals.
- Expand the successful employment specialist training curriculum currently available through Highline Community College to other communities.

“The thinking about employment for people with developmental disabilities can be summarized in this way -

-From impossible to possible

-From possible to beneficial

-From beneficial to allowed

-From allowed to preferred

-From preferred to expected

-From expected to required.....

.....to the same standard as everyone else.”

Alderbrook 2007, David Mank, Ph.D., Indiana University

[Click here to read the “Alderbrook Paper”](#)

TECHNOLOGY

Use 21st century technology and methodology for efficiency and effectiveness—to save time and energy and to reduce costs.

- When feasible and depending on the content, hold web-based training seminars to reach more people.
- Disseminate stories, experiences and information and best practices more easily through interactive websites.
- Introduce people with communication barriers to state-of-the-art, low- and high-tech devices and methodologies to ensure successful interactions at work and in the community.
- Explore electronic portfolios and videos as tools to demonstrate a person's skills and capacities to an employer.
- Explore social networking as a potential tool to connect to the greater community.
- Improve the use of technology within community organizations, including data systems and communication.



Scott Palm of Palmtree Enterprises consults with families, educators, and speech professionals on how to use the latest assistive communication devices.

[Click to learn more](#)

FOCUS ON SCHOOL-TO-WORK TRANSITION

Continue to discover and articulate the ingredients of supportive school experiences and supportive post-school experiences for young adults. Reinforce the expectation that graduation from high school will be followed by a job.

- Encourage and assist young parents in becoming advocates for their children's employment future as early as elementary and middle school.
- Emphasize the emerging data around cost-efficiency and greater success when young adults are expected to work while in school and graduate with a job.
- Support schools to engage in curriculum practices focused on employment outcomes for young adults with intellectual disabilities.
- Encourage counties, DVR and employment providers to expand collaboration with schools around community-based transition programs.
- Expand the practices of embedding community employment specialists within school districts and pooling resources on behalf of graduating students.
- Ensure that community-based school transition programs are followed by employment support in adult services by investing in qualified, well-trained employment specialists.
- Assist school districts in meeting the federal *IDEA* requirements and *State Performance Plan* requirements. These requirements establish and measure the extent of post-secondary employment outcomes in the Individualized Employment Plans of 16 to 21-year-old students and measure the extent to which students who are graduating are competitively employed and/or are enrolled in post-secondary education.

Reuban got his job at Fred Meyer through the Kent School District transition program. He was so excited he used his first paycheck to tattoo the word "money" on his forearm!



[Click to learn more](#)

RELATIONSHIPS & COLLABORATION

Build on the strength of our relationships. Keep employment and community inclusion as the primary goals. Continue to practice what it means to be in community.


- Seek new and better ways of doing business with our primary allies: Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, residential support organizations and their staff, employers, and schools.
- Continue to look for additional allies to help further advance employment: friends, neighbors, legislators, and local elected officials.
- Continue to provide encouragement, support and resources to people with disabilities and their families on their pathways to employment.
- Seek out, respect and engage diverse points of view.

3,000 NEW JOBS BY 2015
WE HAVE TO BELIEVE IT TO SEE IT
WE HAVE TO BELIEVE IT TO LEAD IT



Chris Miller, President, Miller Sheet Metal, "It was cost effective almost immediately."

[Click to learn more](#)



“We all need jobs and we are people with disabilities, but we are just people, that want employment like anyone else.”

Eric Matthes, Seattle

[Click here to watch a video of Employment Advocacy Day 2011](#)

The State of Washington



Proclamation

WHEREAS, the state of Washington has a long history of leadership in protecting and promoting equal opportunity for people who have disabilities; and

WHEREAS, citizens with disabilities continue to experience unemployment and poverty at rates substantially higher than those without disabilities; and

WHEREAS, Washington State's Working Age Adult Policy recognizes that all individuals, regardless of their disability, will be afforded an opportunity to pursue competitive employment; and

WHEREAS, Washington is recognized nationally for its excellence and success in providing supported employment services to people with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, employees with disabilities require assistance to ensure job success and should have access to supports necessary to succeed in the workplace;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Christine O. Gregoire, Governor of the state of Washington, do hereby proclaim February 9, 2011, as

Employment For All Day

in Washington State, and I urge employers to join me in fighting perceptions keeping people living with disabilities from joining the workforce, and encourage employers to hire people with disabilities as an integral part of their workforce.

Signed this 26th day of January, 2011

Christine Gregoire
Governor Christine O. Gregoire

