



## Protect Employment Services Funding and Ensure Access to the Basic Plus Waiver for Students Leaving High School

Updated November 18, 2020

### Action Request

**Protect** employment funding and ensure all State DDA eligible students leaving high school in 2021-2023 are added to the Basic Plus Waiver in order to receive employment and other needed services.

#### Washington's Employment First Policy

In 2006, Washington State enacted the Working Age Adult Policy, also known as Employment First, which prioritized employment services for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). This policy was among the first of its kind in the nation and became a model for many other states to follow. Between 2007 and 2018, the number of individuals with I/DD working for pay in Washington increased by 81 percent.<sup>1</sup>

#### Benefits of Employment Services

Despite their ability, desire, and willingness to work, people with I/DD experience a jobless rate nearly 3 times that of those without disabilities.<sup>2</sup>

Employment services help people with I/DD find and keep competitive jobs in the community that align with their preferences, interests and strengths. This promotes financial stability and independence as well as personal well-being that comes from increased social connections and opportunities to engage with and contribute to the community.

#### High School Transition Age is a Critical Period for Individuals with I/DD

Providing employment services to students with I/DD before they leave school makes all the difference for their future. Students who have paid work experience, or leave school with a job, are over 4 times more likely to remain employed and be included in community life.<sup>3</sup> Those who do not have access to employment services often find themselves at risk of becoming isolated from the community and losing learned skills that lead to gainful employment.

<sup>1</sup> United Cerebral Palsy 2019 Case for Inclusion Report.

<sup>2</sup> State Data: The National Report on Employment Services and Outcomes Through 2017

<sup>3</sup> Center on Transition to Employment: Post-School Outcomes for Transitioning Youth with Developmental Disabilities. Can We Predict Integrated Employment?

#### Employment for People with I/DD in King County: The School-to-Work Program

The King County School-to-Work Program (S2W) is a best practices partnership model between King County, Washington State's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Developmental Disabilities Administration, school districts, employment service agencies, students and families. It supports high school transition age students to seek and obtain employment prior to leaving school.

Approximately half of the students who participated in the King County S2W Program over the past five years exited school with a job. On average, 60 percent were employed six months after school had ended. This outcome exceeds placement rates for young adults with I/DD elsewhere in the nation.<sup>2</sup>

#### Sustain the Investment in Cross-System Support for Students' Futures

High school transition students need opportunities to move into the workforce. Continued investments in our high school transition age students through collaborative efforts such as the School-to-Work Program depend on the Legislature's strong ongoing funding commitment to I/DD employment.

Ensuring Basic Plus Waiver supports are available when students with I/DD leave their high school transition programs allows for those who reached employment to maintain it, and for those who have not yet reached employment to continue their search. Basic Plus Waiver supports are essential for these students to become independent young adults and contributing members of society. It creates a new generation of taxpayers and reduces dependency on other long-term government supports.

**To provide employment and other needed services for all DDA-eligible students exiting high school, ensure they are added to the Basic Plus Medicaid Waiver Program in the 2021-2023 biennium.**