

TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY  
EMPLOYMENT-FIRST POLICY

Policy Statement

TEA hereby adopts the state's policy that earning a living wage through competitive employment in the general workforce is the priority and preferred outcome for working-age individuals with disabilities who receive public benefits. TEA will evaluate recommendations made by the Employment-First Task Force and will adopt rules as necessary that are consistent with the policy.

Guiding Principles

In accordance with Texas Government Code §531.02447(b), TEA's employment-first policy is based on the following guiding principles:

- (1) An individual with a disability is able to meet the same employment standards as an individual who does not have a disability.
- (2) All working-age individuals with disabilities, including young adults, must be offered factual information regarding employment as an individual with a disability, including the relationship between an individual's earned income and the individual's public benefits.
- (3) Individuals with disabilities must be given the opportunity to understand and explore options for education or training, including postsecondary, graduate, and postgraduate education, vocational or technical training, or other training, as pathways to employment.
- (4) TEA must take steps to promote the availability and accessibility of individualized training designed to prepare an individual with a disability for the individual's preferred employment.
- (5) TEA must take steps to promote partnerships with employers to overcome barriers to meeting workforce needs with the creative use of technology and innovation.
- (6) The staff of public schools, vocational service programs, and community providers must be trained and supported to assist in achieving the goal of competitive employment for all individuals with disabilities.
- (7) Competitive employment, while being the priority and preferred outcome, is not required of an individual with a disability to secure or maintain public benefits for which the individual is otherwise eligible.

  
Michael Williams, Commissioner of Education

  
Date