



Improving lives THROUGH  
supports and services  
THAT FOSTER self-determination.

# Champions of Employment

## What is Employment First?



Promoting Employment First

# Who's in the Audience?



## Poll Question #1

What is your role?

- Support Coordinator
- Service Provider
- Regional Office Employee (UR, PR, CLC, SDS, AD, etc.)
- Other State Employee (VR, DHEWD, DBH, RSB, etc.)
- Individual/Family Member
- Other

# Today's Topic



## Understanding what Employment First is from different perspectives

- Kim Buckman, Director of Support Coordination, County Connections
- Candace Cunningham, self-advocate, UMKC Institute for Human Development
- Ellen Fern, parent
- Cassidi Jobe, President, MO APSE, and Executive Director, Summit Future Foundation

# Perception Check



## Poll Question #2

How much do you agree with the statement, “All individuals, regardless of disability, are capable of working”?

- 100% - there is not one person on my caseload who cannot work, or one type of disability that would make work impossible for an individual.
- Mostly – but I have encountered a few individuals whose disabilities make employment extremely difficult.
- For a lot of individuals, employment is possible. But there are some disabilities that make employment impossible.
- I want to, but I have quite a few on my caseload who have been deemed incapable of working.

# Panelist Discussion



## What does Employment First mean to you?

- Employment in a competitive, integrated setting is an intrinsic right
- And even a responsibility
- Employment is an expectation & responsibility
- Employment First is about equity – being treated the same as everyone else
- Encouraging. Support is available for those who need it.

# Time for Reflection



What does Employment  
First mean to you?

# Panelist Discussion



## What do you feel is the most important piece to Employment First?

- Informed Choice
- Raising expectations
- Changing conversations
- Offering choices/options
- Following through with needed supports
- Addressing barriers
- Dignity of Risk
- Inclusion for all

# Time for Reflection

What do you feel is the  
most important piece to  
Employment First?



# Panelist Discussion



- NCI data indicates that approximately 40% of Missourians currently receiving waiver funding, and not already employed in competitive integrated setting, want that type of outcome.
- But according to our Empowering through Employment data, only 8-9% are using their waiver funding for employment supports.

## How do we close that gap?

- Actively listen to people
- Don't assume anything
- Keep asking "why?" – Go beyond the obvious to really understand the issue(s)
- Empower people to have their own voice
- Help individuals & families to understand their choices – including choice of service providers
- Must move beyond "crisis intervention"
- Proactively plan for employment, from day one – even for young children
- Employment is a way to meet other needs & is an integral part of one's life
- Change the conversation – assume everyone can work
- Educate individuals & their families as to what services look like & what they can expect
- Take active steps to address barriers & fears

# Time for Reflection

How do we close the gap that we see from NCI data to our Empowering through Employment data?

# Additional Reflection



What is something you have heard today that you will implement or do differently?

# Perception Check



## Poll Question #3

Where do you need more support in implementing Employment First?  
(select all that apply)

- I struggle with helping individuals/families see the possibilities, to believe employment is possible.
- I talk about employment often & provide many different options, but is that really providing individuals an opportunity to make a truly informed decision?
- I need support with understanding the different services & supports available.
- Addressing barriers that may or may not be resolved with a funded support is what is most difficult for me.

# Where to Learn More



- Division of DD's Employment First Policy - <https://dmh.mo.gov/media/pdf/employment-first-policy>
- MO APSE's website – [www.apsemo.org](http://www.apsemo.org)
- National APSE's website – [www.apse.org](http://www.apse.org)
- EFMO Team –
  - Nick Holz ([Nicholas.Holz@umb.edu](mailto:Nicholas.Holz@umb.edu)) – western MO (ARO, KCRO, JRO, & SpRO)
  - Jessi Keenoy ([Jessica.Keenoy@umb.edu](mailto:Jessica.Keenoy@umb.edu)) – central MO (KRO, HRO, CMRO, & RRO)
  - Leslie Quarles ([Leslie.Quarles@umb.edu](mailto:Leslie.Quarles@umb.edu)) – eastern MO (SLRO, SiRO, & PBRO)

# Save the Dates



Champions of Employment Webinars  
2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of each month

1:30 – 2:30

October 12<sup>th</sup> - National Disability Employment Awareness  
Month

November 9<sup>th</sup>

December 14<sup>th</sup>

# Don't Forget



- Please answer the survey questions at the end of this webinar.
- You're feedback will be very useful in making these webinars worthy of your time.

# Reach Out Anytime



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**THANK YOU!**