

## **Harbor Regional Center Service Policy**

### **Employment First**

#### **DEFINITION:**

“Employment” is defined as regular or customized employment in the workforce

- ⊙ Where employees with disabilities are included on the payroll of a competitive business or industry
- ⊙ Where the assigned employment tasks offer at least minimum or prevailing wages and benefits
- ⊙ Where there are ordinary opportunities for integration and interaction with co-workers without disabilities, with customers, and with the general public.

#### **PHILOSOPHY:**

*Harbor Regional Center opposes segregated employment and subminimum wage for people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities; we seek to promote public policy:*

- ⊙ That restricts the expenditure of public funds to businesses who segregate employees with disabilities from the general workforce;
- ⊙ That ends the ability of employers to pay employees with disabilities a sub-minimum wage;
- ⊙ That discontinues programs that emphasize moving young adults from the classroom to a segregated or sub-minimum wage employment environment.

*Harbor Regional Center seeks to promote and facilitate integrated and comparable wage employment alternatives:*

- ⊙ That strengthen existing and create new government tax incentives for employers to hire employees with disabilities into integrated environments at comparable wages.
- ⊙ That assist employees with disabilities to find employment in the general workforce in jobs that they choose.

*Harbor Regional Center believes the essential ingredients needed to advance competitive integrated employment for people with developmental disabilities are:*

- ⊙ A fierce commitment to make this happen;
- ⊙ A secondary school education which focuses on the development of functional employability skills, early work experiences, mobility training and a competitive employment goal;
- ⊙ Frequent and strong collaboration between the regional center, the local education agencies, the department of rehabilitation, clients and families;
- ⊙ Internship opportunities such as those provided through Project SEARCH as well as paid internships to create opportunities for real world skill development for students as they transition out of school into the world of work;
- ⊙ Post-secondary programs that provide support for students in certificate and degree programs fully integrated with typical students;
- ⊙ Flexibility that supports a combination of paid work, volunteering and integrated non-work day activity options to accommodate client choice while promoting paid work options;
- ⊙ Organized support from the business community;
- ⊙ Public relations activities designed to showcase successful partnerships with the business community; and
- ⊙ Supporting families early to foster and build high expectations for their children.

**POLICY:**

*Harbor Regional Center believes that employment should be the first priority and preferred option for adults with intellectual and other developmental disabilities and is fiercely committed to expecting, encouraging, providing, creating and rewarding integrated employment in the workforce at minimum or competitive wages and benefits. Accordingly:*

- ⦿ Employment opportunities in fully integrated work settings at or above minimum wage shall be the first and preferred option explored in the service planning for working age adults with intellectual and other developmental disabilities irrespective of the severity of their disabilities.
- ⦿ Working age adults with intellectual and other developmental disabilities who are being supported in segregated work settings and/or in settings where they receive sub-minimum wages will be encouraged to transition to fully integrated work settings where they may be paid at prevailing rates.
- ⦿ Harbor Regional Center will not recommend segregated work settings or sub-minimum wage work opportunities for youth and adults with intellectual and other developmental disabilities who are seeking employment.
- ⦿ Working age adults who choose non-work day activity options will be encouraged to select those options which provide maximum opportunity for volunteering and other activities which take place in integrated settings or to consider a combination of both work and non-work day activities.
- ⦿ For those who successfully achieve the goal of employment in an integrated setting, future service planning must focus on maintaining employment as well as the consideration of additional career or advancement opportunities. For those not yet achieving employment, annual service planning must include and reflect employment opportunities as the first and priority service option explored.

Approved by the HRC Board of Trustees March 20, 2018