

To: Parent/Guardian

From: (Director of Special Education)

Date:

Re: Rhode Island Employment First Policy

I am writing you this memo to share important information about an agreement between the State of Rhode Island and the US Department of Justice that will affect the services and programming for your son or daughter as they transition from public education to the adult service system.

In 2014, the State of Rhode Island entered into a Consent Decree with the U.S. Department of Justice regarding violations of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, through the State's operation of day activity centers and sheltered workshops for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. As part of this settlement, the State of Rhode Island has agreed to implement a state Employment First policy.

The Employment First Policy establishes an expectation that all students and adults with intellectual/developmental disabilities should and can successfully obtain and sustain work in community integrated settings and earn competitive wages.

Essentially, this means that state agencies will be working with school districts to help students such as your son or daughter, to prepare for employment after they exit public education. There will be some methods schools will use to help your child plan for employment such as, Person Centered Planning, forming a Career Development Team and developing a Career Development Plan. You will be hearing these terms in IEP meetings and when you meet with adult service agency representatives as we assist your child in preparing for life after high school.

Two of the adult agencies that will likely be discussing services and options with you and your child will be the Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS, which is part of the RI Department of Human Services) and the RI Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH). These agencies play an important role in supporting young adults in seeking and securing employment and supporting them in jobs through their adult life. Naturally, you and your child will be making the decisions about when and how you access the services of these agencies. School district personnel will be here to assist you in learning about the agencies and their services as your son/daughter gets close to exiting high school.

I have enclosed additional information that may be helpful for you including:

- The Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Employment First Policy
- ORS and BHDDH brochure

If you have you have individual questions, please contact your child's teacher. In addition, please keep the following contact information:

- Behavioral Healthcare, Development Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH)
Professional Services Coordinator Carolee Leach @ 401-462-1723 carolee.leach@bhddh.ri.gov
- Rhode Island Office of Rehabilitation Services
(Insert the district ORS Counselor Assigned here....)
Assistant Administrator Joseph Murphy @ 401-462-7854 joseph.murphy@ors.ri.gov
- Rhode Island Parent Information Network
@ 401- 270-0101

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me.