

MOHR Position Statement
Employment of People with Disabilities
December 2019

Background

Employment produces many intrinsic values for people who work, including those with intellectual or developmental disabilities (I/DD). It helps people feel like they have a purpose, belong, are accepted and valued as contributors to a community, business, family, or other group. Employment enables people to develop skills, make friends, increase their income, pay taxes, and improve their quality of life. For many, employment is part of their identity. It allows them to answer the question often posed in social settings: “What do you do?”

A simple definition of employment is performing a job that someone is willing to pay for. However, for people with I/DD, who receive formal support services, employment is often categorized based on funding streams, where someone works, who pays them, type of supports needed to be successful, how much they earn, number of hours worked, and opportunities for interaction with those who do not have disabilities. While these categories may be important for measuring implementation of public policies and investments, they often don’t measure or respect the intrinsic values one receives from working.

While it is appropriate to promote higher earnings and an integrated work environment with non-disabled workers, these are not always the factors that influence where and how people choose to work. The people we serve often find value in work for its social connection to a shared peer group and sense of purpose and not necessarily their level of compensation. For this reason, it is crucial to maintain an array of work environments, support services, and legal protections for people we serve, where they find a place to succeed and enjoy all aspects of work and the people they choose to work with. MOHR presents this position paper based on these fundamental beliefs and to promote a full array of work options from which people with I/DD can choose.

Position:

MOHR supports the right for people with I/DD (and where appropriate, their guardians) to exercise informed choices in all aspects of their lives, including special minimum wage work as is their civil right;

MOHR supports individuals with I/DD disabilities who choose to work; to do so in jobs, places, and conditions of their choice; for wages that are agreeable to both parties; within the legal frameworks of Federal, State, and local laws;

MOHR supports the protection and retention of the Federal special minimum wage provisions (Section 14c) ensuring access to work for those who choose not to work in a competitive work environment and/or this option is not appropriate for themselves, the community, or not adequately funded;

MOHR supports public funding policies that enable people with I/DD to be successfully employed by ensuring that they receive the necessary individualized funding allocation to address their employment support needs;

MOHR supports a service system that enables people with I/DD to work while recognizing that many choose not to work for a variety of reasons, and that they receive the necessary individualized funding allocation to address their non-employment support needs;

MOHR supports the achievement and sustainment of a strong economy in Minnesota where businesses thrive;

MOHR supports public policies that encourage businesses to hire people with I/DD who choose to work; and

MOHR supports public policies that create more opportunities for people with I/DD to work, by eliminating work disincentives to do so.