

## **Guidance on Conversations about Employment for OLTL Participants**

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The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to Service Coordinators to satisfy their obligations under the Commonwealth's Employment First policy. The employment first policy was issued under Executive Order 2016-03, dated March 10, 2016.

Under the "Employment First" policy, the first consideration and preferred outcome of publicly-funded long-term services and supports for working-age Pennsylvanians with a disability, among other things, shall be competitive integrated employment.

As such, OLTL is requiring Service Coordinators (SCs) to:

- Talk with OLTL participants about employment.
- Ensure participants are made aware that Pennsylvania is an "Employment First" state.
- Inform them that OLTL is focusing on feasible employment and community outcomes for home and community-based waivers, procedures, policies and practices.

On an ongoing basis SC's will ensure employment is an essential topic of discussion when meeting with participants. Guidance on initiating an employment dialogue is provided for your use below.

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### **Initiating the conversation: Participant is not working...**

What can we talk about to really understand why the participant is not working?

1. Is there anything about getting a job that worries/concerns you?
2. Have you had the chance to explore work or volunteer opportunities to help identify your skills, talents and interests? Would you like to?
3. What would need to happen in order for you to consider finding a job in the future?
4. Did you know you can often keep some of your benefits even if you work?  
Let me tell you how...

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### **Initiating the conversation: Participant is not working and there is resistance from family member or other person about working...**

What do we talk about to help determine why there is resistance?

1. Talk through each concern the person has related to the participant obtaining employment.
2. Remind the participant and the family member about the expectation that reasonably most everyone can and should work competitively in the general workforce and/or be a contributing member of their local community.

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3. Assist the participant and family to understand their options relative to employment so they can make informed choices.
  4. Remember the expectation of employment may take time. There are many reasons why the participant and/or their family may have resistance to conversations about employment. SC's need to be sensitive to where they are in order to raise expectations. The topic of employment may need to be an ongoing discussion so consideration may be given to employment.
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### **Initiating the conversation: Individual is working...**

What should we ask to determine the participant's future aspirations and goals regarding employment?

1. Are you satisfied with your current job and salary? Are you interested in pursuing other jobs/ careers?
  2. What necessary supports and/or training would you need in order for you to pursue additional opportunities?
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### **Initiating the conversation: Individual acquired a disability...**

What can we talk about to gather information that could be helpful to finding the right job match?

1. What type of employment were you engaged in previously?
  2. What future goals or aspirations do you have regarding your return to the workforce?
  3. Are you familiar with reasonable accommodations in the work place?
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### **Additional employment activities SCs can discuss with the participant.**

1. Encourage/foster networking with family, friends, neighbors and other contacts to seek out job opportunities or volunteer opportunities.
2. Discuss barriers which prevent participants from finding employment and develop a proactive action plan to address any barriers or obstacles participant may encounter.
3. Discuss the availability of services and supports designated to assist participants find and keep a job.
4. Develop an employment career plan for participants interested in competitive employment.
5. Discuss the need for health care benefits in regard to employment.
6. If a participant is employed, discuss opportunities for progress such as increase in wages and/or hours, expanded job duties, opportunities for new or

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improved relationships at work as well as increased independence if paid supports are in place.

7. If a participant indicates the desire and/or need to change jobs, focus on updating information on employment related competencies, education and/or training, continuing education to reach career aspirations and potential of services to assist them in seeking other employment.
  8. Discuss competitive employment first in subsequent plan reviews.
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SCs are expected to talk about employment and employment-related goals with all working-age participants in OLTL home and community-based programs.

- As a follow-up to these conversations during the person-centered service planning process and subsequent participant monitoring, all SCs will document employment goals and conversations in the ISP document, HCSIS and SAMS, as appropriate.
- This resource is intended to support the activities identified and required in the OLTL bulletin 'Employment and Employment Related Services.'

Service Coordination Entities need to ensure that participants understand their response to any facet of the employment initiative will not impact the delivery of the home and community-based services. This needs to be reinforced on an ongoing basis.