In South Carolina, people with intellectual, developmental, and related disabilities remain the most underemployed citizens of the State. The unemployment rate for South Carolinians with disabilities is 80% higher than the unemployment rate for all South Carolinians\(^1\). Furthermore, Individuals with a disability who work earn significantly less than workers with no disability and continue to live in poverty\(^2\). Working people with disabilities experience a poverty rate 46% higher than workers with no disabilities\(^3\).

People with developmental disabilities value work as a measure of self-reliance, community assimilation, dignity, and economic output. The South Carolina Developmental Disabilities Council affirms the following policy priorities for serving South Carolinians with developmental disabilities:

- Implement Employment First practices that lead to meaningful employment in integrated community settings for all working age South Carolinians who desire to work. Employment is the preferred service option and outcome.
- Provide post-secondary transition services to students in schools to prepare students looking forward to entering the community workforce. These services should include career exploration and, when possible, community-based work experiences. Younger South Carolinians consider a range of choices while preparing for their post-school lives including vocational training, career education, and higher education opportunities.
- Address barriers to employment to enhance access to the workplace through an array of individualized, reasonable accommodations to gain and maintain community employment.


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- Encourage self-determined career paths that recognize an individual's highest potential, including self-employment, job retention, career advancement, and retirement plans.
- Disseminate information regarding employment initiatives to individuals and their family members to assist stakeholders to make informed decisions. Informed business leaders, agencies, and organizations work together more efficiently to provide resources and supports.
- Favor access to public assistance benefits such as Medicaid programs during employment because these programs are essential to people’s well-being and extend the success of individuals, families, businesses, and communities.
- Eliminate any real or perceived disincentives to employment for citizens with disabilities.