



# An Employment First Office is Coming to California!

"We all want to work, and employers need employees. The new Employment First Office will focus on helping everyone, including the state agencies supporting us."

- Wesley Witherspoon, Chair  
California State Council on Developmental Disabilities





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## Californians with Disabilities Win Big with the Creation of the State's Employment First Office

**SACRAMENTO**—The California State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD), along with a coalition of disability advocate partners including [California APSE](#), [Disability Rights California](#), [Integrated Resources Institute](#), [PathPoint](#), and [Progressive Employment Concepts](#), championed what began as a proposal to the legislature and ended in the successful creation of the Employment First Office.

California became an employment first state in 2013, yet employment of people with disabilities has continued to linger at 17% despite their ability and desire to work for wages at or above the state minimum wage. Employment First Policy assumes everyone wants to work and that needed services are provided regardless of the severity of an individual's disability. Used successfully in other states, the Employment First Office will help support and coordinate consistent understanding and application of Employment First Policy statewide.

The Employment First Office will be a permanent state office under the California Health and Human Services Agency charged with facilitating the consistent and complete interpretation and implementation of Employment First Policy across the many state agencies and departments providing services to the intellectual and developmental disabilities community.

In 2021, SCDD championed SB 639 by Senator Durazo (Los Angeles), which directs the phase out of subminimum wage programming in California, effective January 1, 2025.

As an employment first state, the next logical step is creating an office to help realize Employment First Policy and improve employment opportunities for our community statewide.

“We all want to work, and employers need employees,” said SCDD Chair Wesley Witherspoon. “The new Employment First Office will focus on helping everyone, including the state agencies supporting us.”

The Employment First Office will resolve the incomplete interpretation and implementation of California's Employment First Policy. You can read more about the policy here:

[https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes\\_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=4869.&highlight=true&lawCode=WIC&keyword=employment+first+policy](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=4869.&highlight=true&lawCode=WIC&keyword=employment+first+policy)

Read the 2023 SCDD report with recommendations about how to phase out of subminimum wage here: [https://scdd.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/33/2023/01/SB-639-REPORT-FINAL\\_ACCESSIBLE-FOR-WEB\\_1.2023.pdf](https://scdd.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/33/2023/01/SB-639-REPORT-FINAL_ACCESSIBLE-FOR-WEB_1.2023.pdf).

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***About The California State Council on Developmental Disabilities:*** *The California State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD) advocates, promotes, and implements policies and practices that achieve self-determination, independence, productivity, and inclusion in all aspects of community life for Californians with developmental disabilities and their families. For more information about SCDD visit [www.scdd.ca.gov](http://www.scdd.ca.gov).*