



TennCare is the state's Medicaid program and the state's Medicaid agency. Medicaid provides both medical and non-medical services to eligible individuals. The non-medical services are known as Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS). Medicaid LTSS can be provided in your home and in the community. They are also called Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) and are the services to help you do things in the community that you want to do – to help you build relationships and reach your goals. On July 1, 2016, TennCare implemented a new HCBS program for people with intellectual and other kinds of developmental disabilities called Employment and Community First CHOICES. It is an integrated HCBS program designed to promote and support integrated competitive employment and independent living as the first and preferred option for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Services in the program will help people become or stay employed and live as independently as possible in the community. For people who are not ready for a job in the community, the program offers services to help prepare for employment.

What services or resources does this agency provide?

Employment and Community First CHOICES



offers services and supports that are home and community based. Supports are available to individuals with I/DD and their families. Enrollment is targeted to young adults transitioning out of school and adults who need support to obtain or maintain integrated employment. It also offers supports to help people with I/DD achieve employment and independent living goals.

The services were designed in response to feedback from stakeholders about the kinds of services people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families said they needed most. The program offers 14 employment services and supports designed to create a pathway to employment. The program also offers services to support community integration, like community transportation and independent living skills



training. In addition, many new services are offered that will empower individuals and families toward independence and integration, like peer-to-peer support.

What areas of Tennessee do they serve?

The Employment and Community First CHOICES program is statewide.

Is there a cost and, if so, who pays?

Most people will not have a cost for the program. But there may be some people who have to pay part of the cost of the services you get in Employment and Community First CHOICES. It's called "patient liability." The amount you pay depends on your income. You will only have patient liability if you had to set up a Qualifying Income Trust (QIT) to qualify for Medicaid. Sometimes a QIT is called a Miller trust.

For which students might this agency be appropriate?

The Employment and Community First CHOICES program is available to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities of all ages who meet eligibility requirements.

Who is eligible to receive their services/ supports and when?

To qualify for Employment and Community First CHOICES, an individual must have an intellectual or developmental disability and meet Medicaid financial and medical eligibility criteria.

What is the referral process?

What documents are needed?

Where can I learn more?

Visit their website at: <https://www.tn.gov/tenncare/long-term-services-supports/employment-and-community-first-choices.html>

Individuals interested in Employment and Community First CHOICES should visit the TennCare LTSS website and complete the online self-referral form. Additionally, there is information about who to contact if assistance is needed in filling out the self-referral form. Visit the website at: <https://www.tn.gov/tenncare/long-term-services-supports/employment-and-community-first-choices/self-referral-form.html>

TennCare has funding to serve up to 2,700 people through June 30, 2018. This means that not everyone who wants to apply can enroll or get services right away. There will be a referral list for Employment and Community First CHOICES. To get on the referral list, you can complete the self-referral form. (The referral list is the same as a waiting list.)

What is the responsibility of an educator?

Educators should inform students and families about Employment and Community First CHOICES as early as possible (this could include children in elementary school). If a student is enrolled in the program, educators should be communicating with the student's Support Coordinator and including them in IEP planning, particularly as it relates to planning for



employment.

How (and when) do you involve them in the transition planning process?

- Students who have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and IEP team at school and are enrolled in the program should ask their Support Coordinator to be involved with the IEP planning and transition process, particularly as it relates to planning for employment. If a person is receiving Employment and Community First CHOICES services, they should talk with their Support Coordinator about applying to access other services (like Vocational Rehabilitation and Benefits Counseling). For example, if a person is between ages 14-22, they should talk to their Support Coordinator about accessing Pre-Employment Transition Services through Vocational Rehabilitation.
- A person's Support Coordinator is expected to coordinate Employment and Community First CHOICES services with any other services provided through other systems like the IEP team and VR representative, if applicable.
- Individuals who receive services are assigned a Support Coordinator who works with the person to develop a "Person Centered Support Plan". The plan includes both education and employment goals, determined by the person. All employment services are designed to support a person pursuing employment with everything from how to figure out what kind of employment they might like, to finding a job, to support on the job, to advancing in the person's career. Services designed to support participation in employment are also available,

such as transportation and assistive technology.

What questions should I ask of TennCare?

- How do I look for colleges, technical schools, or other training opportunities?
- How can I explore my interests to figure out what kinds of jobs I might like?
- How can I access volunteer or internship opportunities?
- How can I find out if working will impact the health care and other benefits I'm receiving?

Additional contact information:

- Give them a call at: 1-800-342-3145 or 1-877-224-0219
- Send them an email at: Tenn.Care@tn.gov