The Colorado Office of Employment First (COEF) is a new training and technical assistance center housed at JFK Partners at the University of Colorado School of Medicine focused on improving employment outcomes for people with disabilities, including those with complex and significant disabilities.

COEF envisions a culture of inclusive, meaningful, and competitive employment for all people with disabilities.

THE COLORADO OFFICE OF EMPLOYMENT FIRST BELIEVES ALL PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES:

- Have talents and skills to benefit their community and workplace,
- Deserve respect as they pursue integrated employment with competitive wages, and
- Have the right to dignity as they shape their own lives—in employment and in their communities.

IN COLLABORATION WITH

Colorado Department of Education
www.cde.state.co.us

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
www.colorado.gov/dvr

“Preparing Young Adults for Employment in a COVID-19 World”

WORK ELEVATED.

A series of brochures focused on preparing young adults for employment developed in collaboration by the Colorado Office of Employment First, Department of Education, and Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.
LIFE LOOKS DIFFERENT

Our schools and community-based services are bound to look different after COVID-19 has impacted the need to practice safety and social distancing. These times at home have been hard and have encouraged reflection on what services and supports are needed. Time at home may have helped a young adult understand what is important to them, what they want to do when they can get out of the house, or a parent might have realized that more self-determination skills are essential for moving towards community engagement.

Potential Lessons Learned at Home

*Importance of:*
- Self-determination
- Vision for community access
- Fading parental supports
- Importance of flexibility
- Computer and technology skills to engage virtually

RESOURCES ARE VIRTUAL

As we have been challenged to stay home, keep learning, keep developing skills, we are fortunate that so many resources for skill development are available online. Here are some resources to enhance a young adult’s preparation for planning their future, building employment-related skills and practicing their self-determination.

- **Explore Work:** explore-work.com
  Five courses young adults can access virtually to keep them motivated.
  - Career Planning and Job Exploration
  - Your First Work Experiences
  - School Beyond High School
  - Workplace Readiness
  - Self-Advocacy

- **T-Folio:** www.cctsfolio.com/#
  A high school transition portfolio to keep focused on future planning.

- **Career Pathway Videos:** kqed.org/education/18675/50-videos-for-career-path-explorations
  Videos for career exploration.

- **My Colorado Journey:**
  www.mycoloradojourney.com
  Tool for customized career and education planning

- **Virtual Job Shadow:** virtualjobshadow.com
  Career exploration platform

COMMUNITY WILL LOOK DIFFERENT

In moving forward, we must understand that life will look different for a while. COVID-19 is not going away soon and has greatly affected our economic and social ways of life. Life will return to some normalcy as the concern of the COVID-19 spread lessens. Keeping motivated and engaged in future planning is still important even though times are so uncertain.

Colorado is an Employment First state and believes in high expectations that all individuals with disabilities can and should work. The new Colorado Office of Employment First encourages young adults and families to utilize this time to build their plan for employment.

**Quality work-based learning practices**
- Use this time to understand what supports are needed when moving back into the school and community setting
- Re-evaluate education and employment plans to ensure they reflect current strengths
- Think about gradually fading parental supports to strengthen self-determination skills
- Invest in computer and technology skill building as a more virtual world is in our future
- Embrace peer supports and networks online