

Please Join Your AFP State Team!

By Joe Macbeth, Policy Committee Co-Chair

By now, we hope you've heard of the Alliance for Full Participation, or AFP, a group of fourteen organizations committed to improving the quality of life for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The NADSP *is a founding member of the Alliance*. In 2005, AFP hosted a summit that looked at how to increase participation in community life for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In 2009, AFP announced a major campaign, **Real Jobs-It's Everyone's Business, and a goal of doubling employment for people with IDD by the year 2015.**

We know this is an ambitious goal. We also know that it is important that we reach this goal, if we are serious about improving the lives of people with disabilities. We must do all that we can to make it possible for everyone to experience the dignity of having a job and contributing to society.

At the heart of AFP is a national network of state teams-state level groups who are working to increase employment opportunities at the local level. State teams work within their state and across the country to look at current policies and practices, establish goals and create plans for doubling employment in their state.

State team leadership and activities vary greatly from state to state, with self advocates, People First organizations, SABE Chapters, DD Councils, DD and Vocational Rehabilitation agencies, employers, APSE Chapters, educators, providers and others taking a leadership role. Some states teams are working within an existing employment coalition, such as a DD Employment Coalition, Employment First initiative or a Medicaid Infrastructure Grant project. Others have created a new group from scratch to focus on employment.

The unifying principle is that all state teams are committed to working within their state to significantly increase the number of people with IDD who are employed by the year 2015. AFP is providing its state teams with tools and technical assistance to help teams identify current challenges and opportunities in the state.

Most states are now growing state teams. Please consider getting involved with your state team. Direct Support Professionals have long been standing on the sidelines during important events like the Alliance for Full Participation. Now, for the first time, we are being asked to be major players. Let's do it!