



FACT SHEET

Employment

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BACKGROUND

Employment for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) continues to be a challenge across the country. Despite recent progress in creating legislation and local employment programs, finding meaningful and community-based employment opportunities continues to be a major challenge for people with disabilities. Congress still has much work to do in improving employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

19.1%
PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY
IN THE LABOR FORCE

Working age people with disabilities are among the most unemployed and underemployed members of our society. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reported that in 2018 the percentage of people with disabilities in the labor force was 19.1%, compared with 65.9% for persons with no disability. The reasons for this problem are complex, often tied to limited exposure to the workforce, reduced expectations, and lack of access to jobs.

KEY ISSUES

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA): WIOA was passed with much support in 2014. WIOA defines an employment outcome as competitive integrated employment. Competitive integrated employment means jobs in the community that pay minimum wage or more. WIOA does not allow the placement of students transitioning from school into segregated subminimum wage jobs without first having the opportunity to try competitive integrated employment. It requires that people in segregated subminimum settings be offered competitive integrated employment. WIOA also requires preemployment services to students transitioning out of high school to help prepare for jobs in the community and requires that vocational rehabilitation services support people finding competitive integrated employment.

Capacity Building for Community Employment: Congress must provide more funds to help people find jobs. States need to make sure there are enough trained staff and programs to support people with finding a job. Congress must also give businesses more tax benefits and find ways to encourage them to hire people with disabilities. Senator Bob Casey (D-PA) has introduced legislation the Disability Employment Incentive Act (S. 255) making improvements to several tax credits to help businesses.

Medicaid cannot pay for employment services and supports available from other sources such as the public Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, the state workforce development system, or educational agencies. VR plays an important role in assisting people with finding jobs, and

Key Points

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- People with disabilities want to work and find jobs in the community.
- Continue strong implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).
- Provide funds to support capacity building for community based employment.

Medicaid funded services work in partnership with VR and other funding sources. However, these other sources do not have the resources to provide the full level of employment services needed by individuals with disabilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Congress should continue to ensure the strong implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).
- Congress should provide funds for capacity building to expand access to employment for people with disabilities.
- All legislation that supports employment for people with disabilities should include a focus on supporting people with the most significant needs in finding community integrated employment.
- Congress should pass The Disability Employment Incentive Act (S. 255) to expand tax credits that make it easier for employers to hire and retain employees with disabilities.

For more information, please contact The Arc at (202) 783-2229, Association of University Centers on Disabilities at (301) 588-8252, American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities at (202) 387-1968, National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities at (202) 506-5813, Self Advocates Becoming Empowered at SABEnation@gmail.com, or United Cerebral Palsy at (202) 973-7185.