



Five Ways You Can Help Expand Opportunities for Competitive Integrated Employment in Your Community Newsletter

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The LEAD Center's Policy Update - Our policy update focuses on the intersection of disability, employment and health care policy and provides policymakers, disability service professionals, individuals with disabilities and their families with information about relevant policy developments regarding WIOA, Medicaid, the Affordable Care Act and related topics, with a focus on improving employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

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Five Ways You Can Help Expand Opportunities for Competitive Integrated Employment in Your Community

Employment is central to all of our lives. A good job contributes to our self-worth, offers membership in a community, provides benefits like health insurance, and is critical to financial stability and independence. The same is true for people with disabilities who seek competitive integrated employment (CIE).

Competitive integrated employment means jobs in typical workplaces, alongside co-workers without disabilities, where people with and without disabilities are paid the same. CIE is critical to achieving equal opportunity, full participation, and economic self-sufficiency for people with disabilities. CIE helps people with disabilities access and participate in the broader community, develop meaningful relationships with peers without disabilities, build new skills and self-esteem, and gives meaning to their days. Perhaps most importantly, CIE provides people with disabilities a pathway out of a life of poverty and towards economic independence.

People with disabilities can and want to work. Yet, many Americans with disabilities struggle to access employment opportunities. Only an estimated 18.5 percent of people with disabilities are employed, compared to about 66.4 percent for people without disabilities. For individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) nationally, an estimated 18.6 percent of individuals receiving day supports from state I/DD agencies participated in competitive

integrated employment services during Fiscal Year (FY) 2015; this number has slowly declined after reaching a peak of almost 25 percent in FY 2001.

The good news is that recent federal and state policies are advancing opportunities for CIE, such as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Settings Rule, and state Employment First policies. These policies provide important opportunities for people with disabilities, their families, providers, and other stakeholders to work together in their states and local communities to expand CIE. This paper provides stakeholders some suggestions for engagement, as well as additional resources.

-  [LEAD White Paper on Community Engagement.pdf](#)

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