

IMPROVING EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES WITH ABLE ACCOUNTS

The Stephen Beck Jr. *Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act* allows certain individuals with disabilities to save money in an ABLE account without losing their public benefits, such as Medicaid. Anyone, including family, friends, and the beneficiary themselves can contribute funds into an ABLE account, provided that all contributions combined in any given tax year do not exceed \$15,000. The money contributed to an individual's ABLE account is meant to help pay for their disability-related expenses. These can include many things, such as clothing for work, transportation, home modifications, or assistive technology. Before the ABLE Act, many individuals with disabilities were unable to save for their future without fear of losing important supports and services provided by programs that have strict limits on their resources and assets.

“The ABLE Act and Employment: Strategies for Maximizing the Effectiveness of the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act as a Tool for Financial Stability and Employment Outcomes of People with Disabilities”

The LEAD Center recently published the policy brief, [“The ABLE Act and Employment: Strategies for Maximizing the Effectiveness of the Achieving a Better Life Experience \(ABLE\) Act as a Tool for Financial Stability and Employment Outcomes of People with Disabilities.”](#) The purpose of this brief is to help people with disabilities, their families, government agencies and departments, and all other ABLE stakeholders to understand how having an ABLE account can help account owners gain employment and improve their overall financial stability. The brief also includes recommendations on how to best utilize the ABLE Act to maximize these outcomes in the systems in which people with disabilities participate, including Workforce Development, Vocational Rehabilitation, Medicaid, and Social Security. The policy brief concludes with a list of action steps so that each of these identified systems can partner with state ABLE programs to improve employment outcomes for ABLE eligible individuals. The ABLE Act limits eligibility to individuals with a significant disability who have an age of onset of disability before turning 26 years of age. A person can be over the age of 26 when they open an account as long as their age at the onset of their disabilities was before their 26th birthday. (For more information on eligibility, visit the [ABLE National Resource Center](#).)

Some examples listed in the policy brief include:

- Utilizing the SSI PASS (Plan for Achieving Self-Support) program in conjunction with ABLE account savings to maintain supported employment services.
- Using an ABLE account to stay below Medicaid’s income limits and to pay for Medicaid Buy-In Program premiums. This allows people to continue to have access to Medicaid-funded supported employment services and health insurance while steadily improving their financial status.
- Having state Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) programs link people to support for setting up ABLE accounts, so that their earnings and concern over losing benefits do not present a barrier to getting and keeping a good job.
- State and local Workforce Development Boards can partner with their state’s ABLE program to improve recruitment of eligible individuals and can work together to help people set financial goals to improve employment outcomes.
- American Job Centers can collaborate with state ABLE programs and other partners to offer job seekers with disabilities financial literacy education, as required for youth and many adults under WIOA, that includes information about the benefits of an ABLE account to help the job seeker gain or maintain employment without fear of losing critical benefits.

As of January 2018, 30 states in the country have already launched ABLE programs, the majority of which are enrolling qualified individuals nationwide. It is vital that people with disabilities and their families understand the benefits of being an ABLE account owner in order to truly maximize the benefits of this newly implemented law.

RESOURCES

[“The ABLE Act and Employment: Strategies for Maximizing the Effectiveness of the Achieving a Better Life Experience \(ABLE\) Act as a Tool for Financial Stability and Employment Outcomes of People with Disabilities”¹](#)

[Archived Webinar: The ABLE Act: A Tool for Financial Stability and Employment Outcomes²](#)

[The ABLE National Resource Center – source for helpful resources and a state ABLE program comparison tool³](#)

1 bit.ly/LEAD-ABLE-Brief

2 bit.ly/LEAD-ABLE-Webinar

3 ablenrc.org