

Employment First Overview

**Aging & Disability
Services Division,
Community Integration
Bureau**

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Overview



The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The ADA is a federal civil rights law enacted by Congress in **1990** that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in everyday activities, including employment.

The ADA guarantees that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as anyone to enjoy **employment** opportunities, purchase goods and services and participate in state and local government programs.

The Olmstead Decision

Olmstead v. L.C. and E.W. is a federal lawsuit decided by the US Supreme Court on June 22, **1999**.

The decision interpreted part of the ADA and became a landmark civil rights decision for Americans with disabilities.

The ADA and the Olmstead Supreme Court decision are about systems change so all persons with disabilities have opportunities for full community integration and inclusion.

Iowa's Olmstead Plan, Key Goals

Economic Stability & Income

Increase access to employment opportunities and stable employment for those with disabilities.

Percent of working aged people with disabilities not employed or who have had a reduction in hours.

What is Employment First

- E1st is a systems-change framework grounded in the belief that *everyone* can work and take part in community life.
- In E1st, publicly-funded systems work to align policies, regulations, and reimbursement structures to promote community integrated employment or competitive integrated employment (CIE) as the FIRST option for employment services for people with significant disabilities.
- Iowa's E1st Vision is "Employment in the general workforce is the first priority and the expected and preferred outcome in the provision of publicly funded services for all working age Iowans with disabilities."

<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/initiatives/employment-first>

What is “Community Employment?”

Everyone, even people with significant disabilities, can and should have the opportunity to work in their community and participate in community life.

Individual job

Paid by employer

Normal job
setting

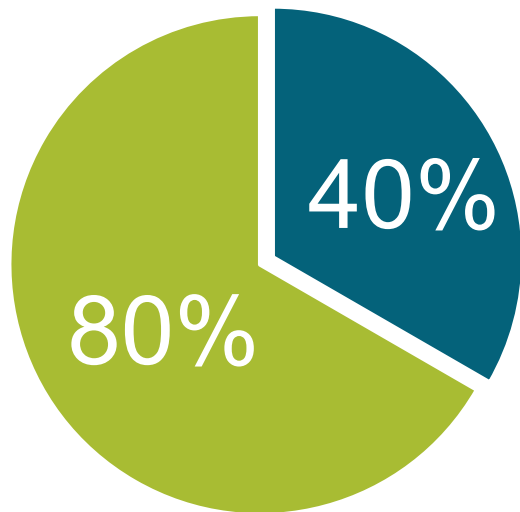
Integrated with
regular workforce

Natural supports
(+ provider if
needed)

Employment Inequities

40% of people **with disabilities** 16-64 **are employed** or looking for employment

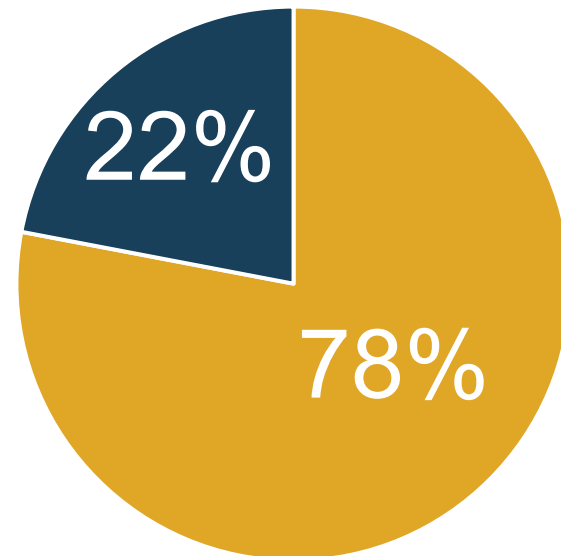
Americans with disabilities



■ Employed ■ Not Employed

78% of people 16-64 **without disabilities** are employed or seeking employment

Nondisabled Americans



■ Employed ■ Not Employed

Iowans with Disabilities



**572,606 adults in
Iowa have a
disability¹**

This is equal to 23% or
about 1 in 4 adults in Iowa

Overview

Why work?

Work and wellbeing

For Most People, **Employment** is a Part of **Recovery**



70% of people with behavioral health illnesses want to work but only 15% *are* employed



Work is the best treatment for serious mental illness (i.e., people with depression, bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia) --Luciano, Bond, & Drake, 2011

When people work, they experience:



Work Outcomes:

Something to do, build a Career, use their talents



Quality of Life Outcomes:

Self esteem, community integration, make friends, contribute to community, symptom control, fewer hospitalizations

What People Say...

“When you’re working, you’re part of the real world. You feel connected. Having a job gives me stability. I have something to look forward to every day.”

“The employment counselor helped me understand why Tony paces. Pacing is OK in the security business.”
--Security business owner

“I worried that if my daughter got a job, she would feel stressed. But just the opposite happened. She’s doing much better than before.”



E1st: The Bottom Line

The Right Thing to Do:

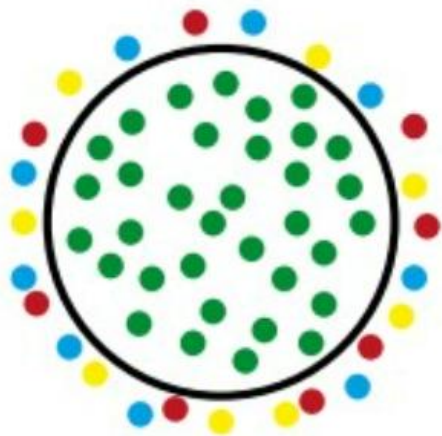
People with disabilities have demonstrated ability and are an untapped resource.

The Smart Thing for Communities to Support:

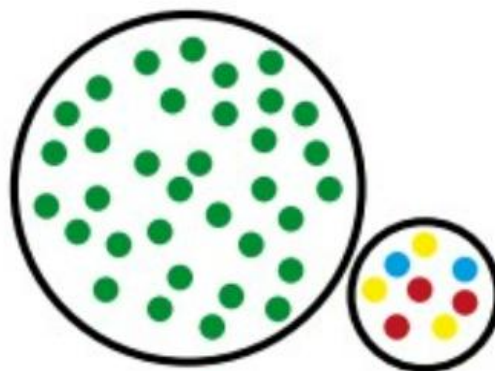
When people with disabilities work and live more independently, they rely less on government, they contribute to the local economy, they use less healthcare, and are more involved in their communities.

Makes Good Business Sense:

People with disabilities are an asset for business. Business models across the U.S. have proven results (KwikStar, Walgreens, Lowes, Home Depot, BankAmerica, other big companies + countless small businesses)



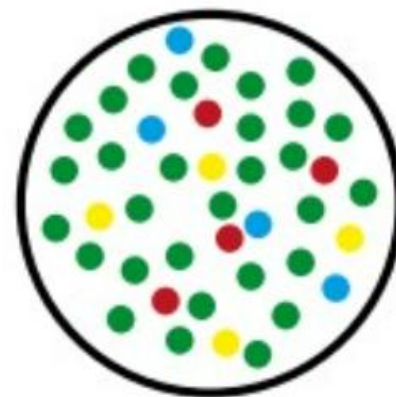
Exclusion



Segregation



Integration



Inclusion

Five Reasons to Create Inclusion in the Workplace



Happier
Employees



Positive
Culture



New
Knowledge



Increased
Production



Greater
Diversity

Overview

Iowa's system of employment supports

Overview
Iowa's system of
LTSS employment
supports



Medicaid funded LTSS Members may flow through...

Career
Exploration
(34 hours of
prescribed
activity in 90
days)

Individual
Supported
Employment

(job
development)

Long Term
Job
Coaching

Individual Supported Employment

Individual Supported Employment are services provided to, or on behalf of, the member that enables them to get and keep an individual job in competitive integrated employment, customized employment or self-employment in the general community workforce.

Long-Term Job Coaching

- Medicaid Monthly Tiers ranging from 1 contact/month to 26+ hours/month
- Reauthorization every 90 days
- Based on need
- Service definitions includes “time on behalf of” members

Individual Placement and Support (IPS) Model

- Services paid by Voc Rehab and/or Medicaid Habilitation
- Researched/normed, currently used primarily with SMI customers
- The only Supported Employment Evidence Based Practice (EBP) to date
- IPS uses a **holistic team** approach & has **8 Basic Tenets**
- An IPS teams' effectiveness is measured by a 25-item **Fidelity Scale**, measured in an annual 2-day on-site review by trained reviewers
- Goes well with CMHC's ACT or FEP programs

IPS Practice Principles



Zero Exclusion



Worker Preferences



Rapid Job Search



Benefits Planning



Integrated
Services



Systematic Job
Development



Competitive
Employment



Time-Unlimited
Supports

Customized Employment/Customized Discovery

- ▶ CE/CD leads to positive employment outcomes for people with disabilities
- ▶ Primary customers: ID/D, significant disabilities, multi-occurring conditions
- ▶ One person - one business at a time
- ▶ Works with those previously seen as “unemployable” or who used 14C settings
- ▶ CE/CD is evaluated with an 8-component Fidelity Scale by trained reviewers
<https://griffinhammis.com/resources/cefidelityscales/>
- ▶ Research is underway to see if it's an EBP
- ▶ Currently a “best” or “promising” practice

4 Essential Components of CE/CD

► Discovery

- 24–60 hours over 5–9 weeks; reveals vocational themes
- Assumes employability with the right job match & supports

► Job search planning

- May use a Visual Resume (a video or slide-show)

► Job development & negotiation

- May include “job carving” and “job analysis”

► Post-employment support

- Natural supports

Self-Employment

- ▶ Medicaid provides supported employment for self-employment similarly to what it does for CIE
- ▶ Voc Rehab has the Iowa Self-Employment Program (ISE)
- ▶ <https://workforce.iowa.gov/vr/career-planning-other-services/self-employment>
- ▶ ISE is for VR or IDB customers who choose self-employment
- ▶ ISE offers business counseling, technical and financial assistance for people to start, expand, or buy a business which is “for-profit” and Iowa based
- ▶ VR assistance is through Microenterprise ISE or Full ISE

Overview

Employment Success Stories

Supported Employment Success Story

- You can watch a video of **Zach Peterson's** experiences with supported employment through Goodwill of Central Iowa and Staybridge Suites
- Honoree Videos - Iowa Job Honor Awards — America's Job Honor Awards

<https://www.jobhonor.org/media-iowa>

https://cdd.center.uiowa.edu/sites/cdd.center.uiowa.edu/files/2025-12/thinking_outside_employment_box.pdf

Thinking Outside the Employment Box

Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Share Their Self-Employment Success Stories



Nic at work in his lens-cutting lab.



Jake Spece tending calves at Johnston Creek Farms

Jake used his expertise in Dairy Science and a PASS (Plan to Achieve Self-Support) to create a strategically targeted business that provides customized feeding and tending of baby calves for farmers and agribusinesses.



Marissa in her new green-house

Beautiful blooms from Straw Hat Farms





Work as Recovery – An IPS Firsthand Account

[“Brian’s Story,” LeMars, IA](#)

See Brian’s Story at

<https://vimeo.com/f8creative/review/914920793/ba0a63807e>

Poppin Joe's: Customized Self-Employment Success

- Joe grew up on his family's Iowa farm where he, like other family members, did tasks to help run the farm
- The family later moved to Kansas and at Joe's school transition meeting, they were told work was out of the picture for Joe except in a sheltered workshop setting
- Joe and his family worked with VR and Griffin-Hammis Associates to help Joe start a thriving popcorn business
- Poppin Joe's sells from a storefront, delivers to local customers, sells wholesale and at concession stands, festivals and events, and sells online.
- See Joe's story at <https://www.thinkwork.org/joe-sustaining-successful-popcorn-business-two-decades>



E1st for Iowans with Disabilities

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Benefits Planning for People with Disabilities

Disability Rights Iowa, contact@driowa.org

Toll Free: 800-779-2502

Individual Placement and Support

University of Iowa Center of Excellence for Behavioral Health,
www.iowacebh.org

Customized Employment aka Customized Discovery

info@griffinhammis.com

Iowa APSE on Employment 1st

<https://iowaapse.org/about-us/what-is-employment-first/>

Includes a nice timeline graphic of events leading up to
Employment 1st

The Job Accommodation Network

<https://askjan.org/index.html>

Contact Info

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Thank You!