

WORK★TO INCLUDE

Everyone Wins When Everyone's IN If Not NOW, When?

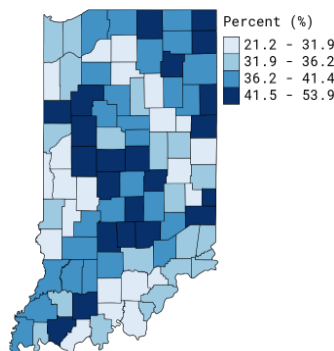
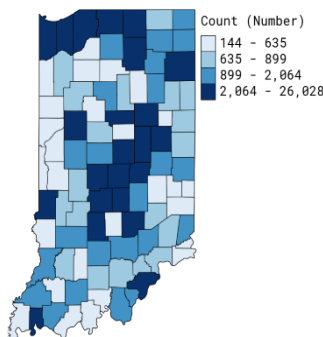
Public Comment to The Indiana Task Force for Assessment of Services and Supports for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, October 14, 2021

The Work To Include Coalition and local teams across Indiana are actively participating in National Disability Employment Awareness Month, a campaign that takes place each October to promote hiring talent with disabilities. Work to Include, a statewide disability-led coalition, has designed a campaign specifically to educate Hoosier businesses about disability employment and celebrate the many and varied contributions of Hoosiers with disabilities. This year's theme is "Everyone Wins when Everyone's IN." Some of the important facts about disability employment include:

Indiana Statistics

- According to the US Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2019), there are 471,338 working age Hoosiers with disabilities. Of that number, less than 40% (37.7%) were employed during the 2018 American Community Survey. Indiana ranks 26th in the country when it comes to employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. This is well below the top five states with employment rates over 50%.
- Studies show that fully two-thirds of individuals not working WANT to enter or re-enter the workforce. This means there are almost 200K individuals who could meet current workforce demands.
- Individuals with developmental disabilities are even less likely to be employed in the community (19%). And only a small percentage have employment included in their plans, despite that fact that over 40% want a job.

Employment for Hoosiers with Disabilities



Potential Employees

Total number of adults with disabilities not working
293,525

Two thirds want to enter or reenter the workforce
196,661

2019 <https://disabilitycompendium.org/>

Worker shortages

Indiana businesses are hurting. Jason Bearce, Indiana Chamber Vice President of Education and Workforce Development, reported the results of a survey of Indiana employers (September 2021). “In the summer of 2021, nearly three-fourths (75%) of employers say the supply of employees doesn’t meet their needs.” That number is up from 50% last year at the height of the pandemic. Moreover, 62% of employers said meeting their talent needs was among their biggest challenges, with 21% saying it was their top challenge. Both numbers are at their highest point in the past three years.

The PROVEN benefits to businesses

The following are all demonstrated benefits that inure to those businesses that hire and support talent with disabilities, some of the top Indiana employers among them (Toyota, Old National Bank, Chase, Cook Inc., and more)

- Higher Profits: Companies have 2x higher net income than peers without disability inclusion initiatives.
- Lower Turnover: Employers report a significant reduction, half of other employees.
- Customer Relations: Consumers prefer businesses that hire.
- Better Employee Culture: There is a demonstrated positive impact on retention of existing employees.
- Creativity and Problem Solving: Employees with disabilities bring a new perspective.
- AND: Preference in federal government contracting, a larger talent pool, and tax and other financial incentives.

Barriers to employment

Individuals with disabilities face real obstacles to competitive, integrated employment. There is the benefits dilemma. People have significant concerns about losing the safety net of Social Security and Medicaid. While there are programs out there, like Ticket to Work and MEDWorks that are aimed at addressing this, few know about or access them. And if they do go to work, they are often subjected to scrutiny and administrative hoops most find confusing and burdensome. And in many, many areas of the state, transportation to and from work is unavailable. Service providers may not be educated in best practices to support individuals with more significant support needs. There are many other barriers, but as a recent study found (Kessler Foundation, April 2021), the number one reason people with disabilities don’t seek employment in the community is their perception about their ability to work and keep a job. They just don’t believe it is possible. As one of our WTI Team Leaders noted, “We’re not willing to jump out of a plane without a parachute or walk a tight rope without a safety net.” That is what we have to build.

What is needed

In 2017 Indiana passed the Employment First Law which requires state services for people with disabilities to focus on competitive, integrated employment. In September 2020, the Indiana Rehabilitation Commission approved a six-point Employment First plan to move systems and services to support competitive integrated employment outcomes. Currently, there is no one entity responsible for implementation of that plan and there are no resources targeted to carry out activities essential to changing systems. Without accountability, it is unclear if the plan will be carried out by all entities serving people with disabilities. With Covid Relief Funds, there are unprecedented dollars coming to our state. Please consider how we can make the most of those dollars to evaluate employment outcomes, change policies and funding mechanisms and build a system that gives people with disabilities the confidence to go to work. These are all included in the Employment First plan so we can finally ensure people have real jobs with real wages.



Work to Include is a statewide disability-led coalition created to educate about disability employment issues and celebrate the many and varied contributions of Hoosiers with disabilities. Funding is provided by the Indiana Governor's Council for People with Disabilities. For more information, contact: Susan Rinne, srinne60@gmail.com, 812-322-5197