

The Arc Wisconsin supports efforts to increase competitive integrated employment (CIE) opportunities for people with disabilities, including people with significant intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). The Arc Wisconsin agrees with the guiding principles for CIE adopted by our state Department of Health Services agency in 2017 including these key points:

1. Everyone can work in a job if it is matched with their skills and interests, and they are provided with the right supports.
2. Competitive Integrated Employment is the first and preferred employment outcome for all working age youth and adults.

Wisconsin has long been a leader in home and community-based supports for people with disabilities, including those with the most significant disabilities. We are now among a handful of states without waiting lists for adult long-term care services, serving approximately 76,953 participants in Family Care (the state's largest HCBS waiver for older adults, people with physical disabilities and people with I/DD) and another 22,519 participants in IRIS (the state's fully self-directed HCBS program). These programs serve a considerable number of people in facility-based prevocational settings (sheltered workshops) where workers typically make sub-minimum wages. Despite access to a full set of HCBS funded employment supports, only 8% of working age people in Family Care/IRIS are engaged in CIE.

Most workers in sheltered workshops in Wisconsin have intellectual disabilities (81%, 2016). Sheltered workshop employees in Wisconsin generally earn an average of \$2.50/hour. In 2016, 1,650 workers earned less than a dollar per hour with half of all workers earning less than \$2/hour.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor 2018 data there are 67 subminimum wage employers/certificate holders in Wisconsin authorized to employ 6,321 Workers through subminimum wages.

Low wages and limited compensated hours make it challenging for individuals with disabilities in Wisconsin's sheltered workshops to earn income. Of all subminimum wage workers reported to the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) in 2016 only eleven earned above the federal poverty line.

Recent federal policy changes regarding use of 14(c) certificates and increased emphasis on CIE have benefited Wisconsin residents with disabilities, particularly youth. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) passed in 2014 directs states to offer competitive integrated employment opportunities to youth with disabilities prior to referral to sub-minimum wage employment. State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) agencies are now required to interview sheltered workshop participants about their employment choices at least annually. In Wisconsin's 2017 interview (6,509 workers) more than 40% of people with disabilities participating in sub-minimum wage facilities said they want to or would consider community employment. In FY17, 3483 individuals reported having a goal of employment other than 14c, and in FY18, that number increased to 3578 individuals reporting a goal of employment other than 14c.

Since the passage of WIOA the percentage of youth with intellectual disabilities engaged in work or post school education in Wisconsin increased to 71.6% in 2017 (up from 66% in 2014) - IDEA Indicator 14 Post-School Outcome data. 2018 IDEA data shows that the percentage of youth reporting being in a job over 90 days rose from 52% to 57%. The percentage of youth earning minimum wage or greater rose from 69% to 84%. From 2014 to 2017 the percentage of youth who reported getting a raise went up from 18% to 30%. Increases in access to competitive integrated employment are even greater in Wisconsin when looking specifically at populations of youth with intellectual disabilities and autism.

People with disabilities are telling us they want to work in the community but they are not being connected to essential supports and a job. Wisconsin's National Core Indicator data (people with I/DD surveyed in Wisconsin's long-term care system) indicates that 55% of people with I/DD surveyed indicate they would like a job in the community but do not have one. This statistic compares to 45% of NCI respondents nationally.

Wisconsin has the right ingredients for success to increase rates of CIE. Employers in our state's Disability:IN network and our state's low unemployment rate (2.9%) indicate opportunities exist and employers are ready to hire. Our Medicaid-funded long-term care system without waiting lists is capable of providing supported employment and other essential work-related services and our DVR system is spending more than the required 15% on youth pre-employment transition services. (In FY2018 Wisconsin DVR spent nearly \$11.5 million on Pre-ETS for students ages 14 to 21.)

Still, clearly people with disabilities, their families and providers in Wisconsin need additional support to connect people with community employment and increase their earning power and independence.

We appreciate the continued support of strong federal policies that focus on the goal of CIE as the preferred use of public dollars and outcomes for working age people with disabilities and look forward to future funding opportunities, technical assistance and grants from US DOL and the whole administration that can help Wisconsin continue its transformation toward building a truly diverse community workforce.