

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)
Investing in America's Competitiveness

Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973: Vocational Rehabilitation and other Disability Programs

Workforce Investment Act of 1998 includes amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, provisions which authorize Federal investment in disability-related workforce training, employment, independent living, and research programs. These programs are reauthorized in WIOA, title IV.

The largest program, Vocational Rehabilitation, is distributed via formula grant to state agencies to provide supports and services for individuals with disabilities. This is the largest investment in disability employment. Currently, all disability programs reauthorized in WIOA are under the jurisdiction of the US Department of Education; however, WIOA seeks to transfer some programs to the US Department of Health and Human Services:

Disability-Related Programs (Title IV) Current Law	Disability-Related Programs (Title IV) WIOA
Vocational Rehabilitation – US Dept. of Education	NO CHANGE
National Institute for Disability and Rehabilitation Research – US Dept. of Education	National Institute for Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research – US Dept. of Health and Human Services
Independent Living – US Dept. of Education	Independent Living – US Dept. of Health and Human Services
Independent Living for Blind – US Dept. of Education	NO CHANGE
Assistive Technology – US Dept. of Education	Assistive Technology – US Dept. of Health and Human Services

Additional Improvements for Individuals with Disabilities in WIOA

The proposed language makes additional improvements to better serve individuals with disabilities and ensure maximum opportunity to meaningfully participate in our nation's workforce.

- Defines, for the first time, 'competitive integrated employment' and prioritizes throughout the maximum opportunity for each individual served to experience and participate in employment that is both competitive (compensated at or above the minimum wage) and integrated.
- Strengthens the coordination between delivery of special education transition services under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and Vocational Rehabilitation by requiring state agencies to expend 15% of funds on 'pre-employment transition services' to equip students with disabilities for success in postsecondary life, including career.
- Reauthorizes and improves the Supported Employment Program by directing state agencies to expend at least 50% of funds on supported employment services for youth.
- Institutes limitations on the use of special wage certificates to employ individuals with disabilities under the age of 24 – to prevent the unchecked flow of students with disabilities from school to sheltered workshop employment that is compensated at a subminimum wage.
- Prohibits school districts and state educational agencies from contracting with subminimum wage employers and prohibits certificate holders from providing information and referral to subminimum wage employment.
- Establishes an advisory committee within the US Department of Labor to provide counsel on achieving competitive integrated employment for individuals with disabilities participating in workforce training and employment programs across federal agencies.