

## **My Transition My Career Position Statement On Competitive, Integrated Employment**

This position statement was generated based on the experiences and preferences of stakeholders who attend the My Transition My Career All Stakeholder Quarterly Meetings.

### **Our Position:**

For decades, achieving higher rates of competitive employment has been a primary goal for the disability rights community. However, a lack of investment in supports and services designed to increase competitive, integrated employment outcomes coupled with persistent myths relating to disability employment, people with disabilities have yet to realize this vision fully. Everyone is employable, and anyone who identifies work as a goal should receive the opportunities and supports needed to achieve employment, including reasonable accommodations to help them prepare for, attain, and maintain competitive, integrated employment: community-based jobs, working alongside people without disabilities, earning at least minimum wage.

### **Our Reasons:**

Research has consistently demonstrated the benefits of employment for people with disabilities. For example, a study found that people with disabilities who worked were healthier, reported a higher quality of life, and had lower Medicaid and Medicare costs than those who were unemployed.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, people with disabilities have significantly higher rates of unemployment than people without disabilities<sup>2</sup> and, even when employed, earn far less money than their nondisabled peers.<sup>3</sup> Studies show that only 15 percent of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are employed, and fewer than half of those 15 percent receive competitive wages.<sup>4</sup> This is contrary to not only the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) but also the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which explicitly outlines the importance of enhancing economic independence for people with disabilities in accordance with the nation's founding principles.<sup>5</sup> In addition, people with disabilities are often afraid to work because they believe that working will cause them to lose their Social Security, Medicaid, and other public benefits.<sup>6</sup>

Kansas continues to lag behind in competitive employment opportunities and outcomes for people with disabilities. According to a study, only 46% of Kansans with disabilities were employed in 2017.<sup>7</sup> In addition, research shows that students with disabilities are too often discouraged from seeking competitive, integrated employment, with one survey showing that 20% of respondents had Individual Education Program (IEP) goals indicating that they would work in a sheltered workshop — a segregated setting paying less than minimum wage — but less than 5% actually wanted to work in a workshop.<sup>8</sup> For Kansans with intellectual and developmental disabilities, the prospect of competitive, integrated employment supports is particularly bleak. Current data shows that a person with an intellectual developmental disability is four times more

likely to engage in subminimum wage activities<sup>9</sup> than engage in supported employment opportunities<sup>10</sup> leading to competitive, integrated employment. Supported employment accounts for less than one tenth of one percent of all I/DD expenditures in Kansas.<sup>11</sup>

**Evidence Based Recommendations That Increase Competitive, Integrated Employment:**

- People with disabilities are employable, and people with disabilities that work are healthier and more integrated in their community.<sup>12</sup> For example...
  - The Employment 1<sup>st</sup> law states that Kansas state agencies and organizations should collaborate to increase opportunities and supports Kansans with disabilities need to achieve and succeed in competitive, integrated employment.<sup>13</sup>
  - People with disabilities have better employment outcomes when they have support plans, including Individualize Education Programs (IEP) and Person-Centered Plans, that include goals and objectives focused on achieving competitive, integrated employment. Ensuring every person with a disability has an employment-focused goal in their support plan could enhance employment outcomes.<sup>14</sup>
  - Transition-aged students with disabilities have better employment outcomes when they receive Supported Employment services and supports, including career exploration, work experiences, financial and benefits management skills, as well as self-advocacy and independent living skills. These services and supports can be offered to students with an IEP via pre-Employment Transition Services (pre-ETS). For transition-aged youth who do not attend school, these services and supports can be provided through Vocational Rehabilitation or Local Workforce Centers (also called American Jobs Centers).<sup>15</sup>
  - Employers are more likely to hire people with disabilities when they have experience hiring other people with disabilities and feel supported by external organizations.<sup>16</sup> States that have alignment between the values for competitive, integrated employment and fiscal investment have a higher percentage of people with disabilities engaged in competitive, integrated employment.<sup>17</sup>
  - People with disabilities who access financial programs such as benefits planning and ABLE earn and save money without jeopardizing their receipt of public benefits.<sup>18</sup>

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## References

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- <sup>4</sup> *id.*
- <sup>5</sup> 42 U.S.C. § 12101(a)(7)
- <sup>6</sup> Morris, Rodriguez, & Blanck. (2016). ABLE accounts: A down payment on freedom. *Inclusion* 4(1), 21-29.
- <sup>7</sup> Erickson, W., Lee, C., & von Schrader, S. (2019). 2017 Disability Status Report: Kansas. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Yang-Tan Institute on Employment and Disability (YTI). Available at: [https://www.disabilitystatistics.org/StatusReports/2017-PDF/2017-StatusReport\\_KS.pdf](https://www.disabilitystatistics.org/StatusReports/2017-PDF/2017-StatusReport_KS.pdf)
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- <sup>9</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division, 14(c) Certificate Holders. (2023). Available at: [14\(c\) Certificate Holders | U.S. Department of Labor \(dol.gov\)](https://www.dol.gov/eis/whd/14c/certificate-holders)
- <sup>10</sup> Tanis, E.S., et al. (2023). The State of the States in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Kansas University Center on Developmental Disabilities, The University of Kansas. [stateofthestates.ku.edu](https://stateofthestates.ku.edu). Available at: [KS-6pg \(ku.edu\)](https://stateofthestates.ku.edu/ks-6pg)
- <sup>11</sup> *id.*
- <sup>12</sup> Hall, J. P., Kurth, N. K., & Hunt, S. L., *supra*, at 100-106.
- <sup>13</sup> K.S.A. 44-1136-38 Available at: [https://www.kslegislature.org/li\\_2022/b2021\\_22/statute/044\\_000\\_0000\\_chapter/044\\_011\\_0000\\_article/044\\_011\\_0036\\_section/044\\_011\\_0036\\_k/](https://www.kslegislature.org/li_2022/b2021_22/statute/044_000_0000_chapter/044_011_0000_article/044_011_0036_section/044_011_0036_k/)
- <sup>14</sup> Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services. A Framework for Community Engagement-A Pathway to Competitive Integrated Employment. (2022). Available at: [A Framework for Community Engagement – A Pathway to Competitive Integrated Employment](https://www.ksrehab.org/Portals/0/Assets/CommunityEngagementFramework.pdf)
- <sup>15</sup> *See*, 34 C.F.R. § 361.48
- <sup>16</sup> Erickson, William A., Schrader, Sarah von, Bruyère, Susanne M., VanLooy, Sara A., Matteson, David S. (2014). Disability-Inclusive Employer Practices and Hiring of Individuals With Disabilities. *Rehabilitation Research, Policy, and Education*, 28 (4): 208-224.
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- <sup>18</sup> Morris, Rodriguez, & Blanck, *supra*, at 21-29.

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