



YOUTH
POWER!

Real Work For Real Pay:

**A Self-Advocate's Guide
to Employment Policy**

1. Introduction

What is this toolkit?

This toolkit is about **Employment First**. Employment First is an idea about how to help people with disabilities get good jobs.

Employment First means that:

- disabled people should be able to get the same kind of jobs as non-disabled people.
- disabled workers should get paid the same as non-disabled workers.

This toolkit will explain:

- What Employment First is
- What problems made Employment First happen
- What **sheltered workshops** are
- Why it is hard to get rid of sheltered workshops
- How we can solve problems disabled people have with **employment**
- Why **work requirements** are a bad idea

Why is this toolkit important?

Many people with disabilities want to work. Many things make it hard for disabled people to get good jobs. For example:

- Bosses might not think disabled people can do a job well
- The law lets some companies pay disabled workers a lot less money than non-disabled workers
- Sometimes the government makes bad policies and programs

People with disabilities should be able to do **real work for real pay**. Real work for real pay is what Employment First is all about.

Disabled people might have problems when we look for good jobs. This toolkit will talk about those problems. The toolkit will explain how we can fix those problems.

At the end of the toolkit, we will talk about work requirements. Work requirements are an important policy issue. We will explain what work requirements are. We will explain why work requirements would not help people with disabilities.

You can use the information you learn in this toolkit to do different things:

- You can use it to explain what kind of job you want
- You can use it to understand employment programs in your state
- You can use it to help fight for the rights of disabled workers

How can I use this toolkit?

You can read this toolkit from beginning to end. Or you can go straight to the parts that you want to know more about.

Glossary words

You'll see some words in this guide that are **bolded**. We explain these words in the Glossary at the end of the toolkit. The Glossary at the end has words from every section.

Examples

This toolkit uses examples to show how things works in real life. To make it clearer, examples will look like this:

For example, ASAN published a toolkit called Real Work For Real Pay: A Self-Advocate's Guide to Employment Policy. The toolkit uses large text and plain language.

ASAN designed this toolkit so that any person with any disability can use it and learn from it.

2. Overview: Employment First

What is employment?

Employment means that you work at a job and get paid for the work you do. The money you get from your job is called your “**wage.**”

There are different kinds of employment.

Segregated employment

Some jobs make people with disabilities work apart from non-disabled people. This is **segregated employment**. Another name for this is congregate employment.

Competitive employment

Competitive employment means that disabled workers get the same amount of money as a non-disabled worker doing the same work.

Integrated employment

Integrated employment means that disabled people work in the same place as people without disabilities. Disabled workers do the same kind of work as the non-disabled workers.

A job does not count as integrated employment unless it is also “competitive” employment. Sometimes this is called “Competitive Integrated Employment.” To keep things simple, we will usually just say “integrated employment.”

Supported employment

Supported employment gives disabled workers support at our jobs. Supports help disabled people succeed at work. Supported employment helps disabled people get jobs in our communities.

Employment First is an idea

Employment First is an idea about how to help people with disabilities get good jobs. Employment First means a state should help everyone who wants to work find **real work for real pay**. It means before a state tries other services, like **day habilitation**, they should try employment first.

Here's what that means:

- Disabled people should be able to work if we want to.
- Disabled people should be able to work in our communities. We should be able to work in the same place as non-disabled people.
- Disabled people should be able to get the supports we need to work. We should be able to get the supports we need if we need a lot of support, or if we only need a little.
- Disabled people should get the same wage that non-disabled people do.

Disabled people should get real work for real pay as a first choice.

Real work for real pay

“Real work for real pay” means the same thing as “**competitive and integrated employment.**” “Real work” means people with disabilities work in the same place as people without disabilities. “Real work” also means disabled people do the same kind of work as our non-disabled coworkers.

“Real pay” means disabled workers get paid the same amount as a non-disabled worker doing the same job. Right now, there are some jobs where disabled workers get paid much less than non-disabled workers. We'll talk about that more later.

Employment First means that disabled people can get real work for real pay.

Why is Employment First important?

Too many disabled people are ending up in segregated employment

Some people think that disabled people who need a lot of support cannot work. Some people think that disabled people who need a lot of support will not be good enough at a job. Because of these wrong ideas, companies do not give people with disabilities a chance. Instead, disabled people end up working in **segregated** places like **sheltered workshops**.

Working in our communities is better than working in segregated jobs

Disabled people in segregated work cannot choose what kind of job they do. Segregated jobs hurt people with disabilities. Here are some of the reasons why:

- Segregated jobs keep disabled people away from our communities
- Disabled people in segregated work might get paid less than people without disabilities
- Low wages make it hard to pay for basic things like food and rent

It is good for people with disabilities to work in our communities. It is better than working in segregated places. When we work in our communities, we:

- make more money
- learn more skills
- have better lives

People can use the Employment First idea to help more disabled people get work in our communities.

Employment First helps disabled people get real work for real pay

Every state has its own government. A state government makes laws and programs for their own state. Some states have their own Employment First laws. The laws help states make new programs and services. The new programs and services help disabled people get real work for real pay.

Example: Illinois Employment First

In 2013, Illinois passed a law called the Employment First Act. The law makes Illinois an Employment First state. That means real work for real pay has to be the first choice for disabled people in Illinois.

The state government made changes because of the new law. They started trying lots of ways to help disabled people get real work for real pay. Some of these ways were:

- Giving more money to programs that help disabled people in Illinois find jobs they want to do
- Teaching service providers how to give better job supports to disabled workers
- Training big companies to hire people with disabilities and give them the supports they need

Employment First programs help disabled people get integrated employment.

Some disabled people need supports to help us get a job. Some examples of these supports are:

- someone who works with you to help you find out what kind of job you want
- someone who can drive you to your job or teach you how to take the bus
- a job coach who goes with you to your job and helps you stay on track

Employment First programs help disabled people get supports to work in our communities. Employment First programs can also help people leave sheltered workshops and get new jobs.

Integrated employment services are not expensive. They cost about the same as segregated employment services.

Integrated or Segregated Employment?

Here are some examples of integrated and segregated employment. Can you tell the difference?

Example 1: Mark

Mark has an **intellectual disability**. He works four hours a day, five days a week in a factory that makes clothes. All of Mark's co-workers also have intellectual disabilities. He makes 1 dollar an hour for his work.

This is segregated employment. This is a good example of what a sheltered workshop looks like.

Example 2: Beth

Beth is deaf and has a **developmental disability**. She works 3 days a week making car parts. Most of Beth's co-workers were her classmates in high school. Her co-workers are also disabled and have high support needs. Beth makes 8 dollars an hour for her work, which is the minimum wage in her state.

This is segregated employment. Beth is making the minimum wage. But, her job is still segregated employment. That is because Beth only works with other disabled people, separate from non-disabled people.

Example 3: Joe

Joe and his friends all have Down Syndrome. They are all janitors at the local elementary school. When classes are going on, they go around the school and clean. They also clean the classrooms after school is over. They make minimum wage for their work.

This is segregated employment. Joe and his friends are working in the same building as non-disabled people. But, they are doing a different job. They still do not get to be around non-disabled people that much. This type of work is also called an **enclave**. That is when disabled people are in the same space as non-disabled people, but are still separated.

Example 4: Sally

Sally works in a fast-food restaurant on weekday afternoons. She started out making the salads. Now, her non-disabled co-worker is teaching her how to use the fryer. Sally makes the same amount of money as all of her other co-workers.

This is integrated employment. Sally is doing the same work as her non-disabled co-workers. That means it is a “real job”. Sally is making the same amount of money as her co-workers. That means she gets “real wages”.

Example 5: Harold

Harold is blind and has an intellectual disability. He gets distracted easily. Harold needs a lot of job training and someone to help him stay on-track. He works in the laundry section of a hotel folding towels and sheets.

A job coach helps Harold set up his work station each day and keeps him on-task. Harold works five days a week for three hours each day for minimum wage pay.

This is integrated employment. This is an example of what supported employment might look like.

3. Why do we need Employment First?

Fair Labor Standards Act Section 14(c)

The **Fair Labor Standards Act** is a law passed in 1938.

The Fair Labor Standards Act did some helpful things. The law made a **minimum wage** for everyone in the United States. The minimum wage is the smallest amount that your boss is allowed to pay you for your work. Right now (in July 2018), the minimum wage is \$7.25. The law says that workers have to be paid at least \$7.25 for every hour of work they do.

But the Fair Labor Standards Act leaves out some people. The part of the law that leaves out disabled people is called **Section 14(c)**. Section 14(c) lets companies pay disabled people less than the minimum wage. Companies get a special piece of paper called a 14(c) certificate. The certificate says that the company is allowed to pay disabled people less than the minimum wage. Today, about 141,000 disabled workers in the U.S. make less than the minimum wage.¹ This is because of Section 14(c).

It is wrong to pay workers with disabilities less than minimum wage. Because of Section 14(c), many workers with disabilities do not make enough money to survive. Workers with disabilities should be paid fairly.

¹ <https://www.dol.gov/whd/specialemployment/> accessed July 2018

Sheltered workshops

Most of the companies that have 14(c) certificates run **sheltered workshops**. “Work centers” are another name for sheltered workshops. Sheltered workshops are a kind of **segregated employment**. Only disabled people work at sheltered workshops. They work apart from the rest of the community.

People in sheltered workshops often have to do the same task over and over. For example, someone working in a sheltered workshop might put paperclips in boxes all day. Working at sheltered workshops does not help workers learn new skills.

The disabled people that work in sheltered workshops do not make much money. They usually get paid less than minimum wage for their work. Some sheltered workshops pay their workers less than \$1 for an hour of work.

Even if the sheltered workshop pays the minimum wage, it is still a sheltered workshop. It is still a sheltered workshop because it is segregated work.

Sheltered workshops use productivity tests

Sheltered workshops use a test to decide how much money to pay someone. It is called a **productivity test**. The test is not fair.

The test looks at how much work a disabled person does in an hour. Then it looks at how much work a non-disabled person does in an hour. The test compares how much work both people did. If the disabled person did less work, the sheltered workshop can pay them less money. They can even pay them less than minimum wage.

Productivity test example: Gemma

Here is an example of how this test works:

Mr. Bossman runs a sheltered workshop where workers make toys. All of the workers are people with disabilities.

Mr. Bossman times himself making toys for one hour. Mr. Bossman makes 100 toys. He decides this is the right number of toys for 1 person to make in 1 hour.

Gemma has a disability. She makes toys at the sheltered workshop. Gemma has to take a test to find out how much money she will get.

Mr. Bossman watches Gemma make toys for an hour. Gemma is nervous about taking the test. That makes it hard for her to focus. In one hour, Gemma makes 50 toys. Mr. Bossman writes that number down.

Mr. Bossman compares the number of toys Gemma made, to the number of toys Mr. Bossman made when he took the test. Gemma made 50 toys. Mr. Bossman made 100 toys. Because Gemma made less toys, Mr. Bossman will pay her less.

Productivity tests do not work

Companies use productivity tests to decide how much money a disabled worker can get. The tests do not really tell companies how good a worker is at their job.

There are lots of reasons someone might do badly on the test. They might do badly on the test even if they usually work very fast. For example, they might be nervous about the test, like Gemma was. She could not focus very well because she was worried about the test.

Companies might use one test to decide how much someone gets paid for many years. Someone could get better at their job but still get paid the same amount. This is a problem.

Productivity tests are unfair

Productivity tests are unfair because companies do not treat non-disabled workers this way.

In any job where a lot of people work together, some people work slower. Some people work faster. Companies still have to pay all their workers at least minimum wage. They have to pay minimum wage no matter how fast or slow the workers are. But if the workers have disabilities and the company has a 14c certificate, the rules change. Their bosses can pay them less than minimum wage.

This is wrong. Disabled people should have the same rights at our jobs as everyone else.

Disabled workers get pushed into sheltered workshops

Many people with disabilities get pushed into sheltered workshops. They go straight from being in school to working in a sheltered workshop.

While they are at school, their teachers teach them how to work in a sheltered workshop. Their teachers do not teach them about jobs in the community. The students do not get a chance to try real work for real pay.

When they leave school, they are sent to sheltered workshops. People will not help them find jobs in the community.

Here's an example:

Jamie has a **developmental disability**. He is a senior in high school. Jamie wants to work with computers when he leaves school.

Jamie's teachers talk to him about getting ready for a job. For a month, Jamie has to spend time traveling to a sheltered workshop. Working at the sheltered workshop is part of his classes.

Jamie does different kinds of work at the sheltered workshop. Sometimes he washes dishes. Sometimes he cleans up messes. The sheltered workshop pays Jamie \$5 a week.

When Jamie leaves school, he starts getting training to be a dishwasher. He does not really want to be a dishwasher.

The sheltered workshop offers Jamie a job as a dishwasher. The job does not pay very much money. But Jamie feels like it is the only job he knows how to do.

He does not feel like there is another choice if he wants to have a job.

Integrated employment is the best choice

Some people think working in a sheltered workshop helps disabled people. They think it helps the disabled people get **integrated employment** later. They are wrong.

People have done a lot of research about sheltered workshops. They did research to find out if working in a sheltered workshop helps disabled people get jobs in the community.

They talked to people with disabilities. All of the people had jobs in the community. Some of them went straight to integrated employment. Some of them worked in sheltered workshops first.

Here's what the researchers found out. Working in a sheltered workshop does not help disabled people get more jobs. People who never worked in a sheltered workshop did better:¹

- They got more money.
- They worked more hours.
- It cost less money to support them.

Researchers asked people who had been in both kinds of jobs which kind they liked better. Most people said they like integrated employment better than being in a sheltered workshop.²

1 Cimera, R. E. (2011). Does being in sheltered workshops improve the employment outcomes of supported employees with intellectual disabilities? *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 35*, 21-27.

2 Kober, R. & Eggleton, I. R. C. (2005). The effect of different types of employment on quality of life. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research, 49* (10), 756-760; Migliore, A., Mank, D., Grossi, T., & Rogan, P. (2007). Integrated employment or sheltered workshops: Preference of adults with intellectual disabilities, their families and staff. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 26*, 5-19; Petrovski, P. & Gleeson, G. (1997). The relationship between job satisfaction and psychological health in people with intellectual disability in competitive employment. *Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disability, 22*(3), 199-211.

4. Why do we still have sheltered workshops?

There are three big reasons why we still have sheltered workshops.

1. The people who own sheltered workshops don't want to stop making money
2. Some people think that sheltered workshops are a good thing for disabled people
3. The government is not doing enough to help disabled people get jobs

Sheltered workshops make money for the owners

Many **sheltered workshops** are also **Medicaid** providers. They get money from Medicaid. Medicaid pays the sheltered workshops money for every worker with a disability. Medicaid pays sheltered workshops more money if more disabled people work there.

Sheltered workshops also get money from selling the stuff disabled workers make.

If the disabled workers left, the workshop would lose money. That is why sheltered workshops do not want to help their workers find **integrated employment**.

Sheltered workshops do not follow the rules

There are rules about getting money from Medicaid. Sheltered workshops that get money from Medicaid have to follow the rules.

Sheltered workshops are supposed to help workers get integrated employment. That is one of the rules for getting money from Medicaid. But sheltered workshops usually do not help their workers get integrated employment. Sheltered workshops want to keep their workers, because they do not want to lose money.

In 2001, the government looked at workers in sheltered workshops. The government found out that only 5 percent of the workers ever moved to integrated employment.¹

Some people think sheltered workshops are a good thing

There are some people without disabilities who think that sheltered workshops are good for people with disabilities. Here's what they say.

Three reasons people think sheltered workshops are a good thing

Reason 1: Families worry about their disabled family member

Some people with disabilities have families that worry. They worry what would happen if their disabled family member was not working at a sheltered workshop.

They worry that without the job, their disabled family member would have to stay home. The disabled family member might need their family to take care of them. Then, those family members would have to stop working too.

Reason 2: They don't like day habilitation centers

Sometimes disabled people do not work in sheltered workshops. Sometimes, they do not work at all.

Instead, they might end up in a "**day habilitation center.**" These places are like day-care centers. Families can drop off a disabled person at one of these places. Family members might do this when they have to work. Or, if they need to take a break.

These centers have some things in common with sheltered workshops. They might separate disabled people from non-disabled people. The difference is the day centers do not give disabled people jobs. The centers do not pay the disabled people any money.

¹ <https://www.gao.gov/new.items/d01886.pdf>

Many self-advocates do not like day habilitation centers either. We want **Employment First** instead.

Reason 3: Sheltered workshops give disabled people jobs

It used to be a lot harder for disabled people to get jobs. Back then, working at a sheltered workshop might be the only way a disabled person could get a job. This made some people think that sheltered workshops are a good thing.

Now, we know lots of ways to support people to get jobs in the community. We know that disabled people can work in our communities. We can work in our communities even if we need a lot of support. But some people still think sheltered workshops are the only option for people who need a lot of support.

It is important to listen to people with disabilities

We have talked about 3 reasons why some people support sheltered workshops. Those reasons are not good enough.

Lots of non-disabled people want to help people with disabilities. That is a good thing. But people need to learn the facts about sheltered workshops. They need to learn that sheltered workshops do not really help disabled people. They need to listen to what people with disabilities have to say.

Government programs do not do enough to help

Vocational rehabilitation programs

Every state has programs to help disabled people get jobs. These programs are called **vocational rehabilitation**. The government gives states money to run their vocational rehabilitation programs.

The people in charge of vocational rehabilitation programs have to follow the rules. If they do not follow the rules, they can't get money from the government. But a lot of vocational rehabilitation programs still do not follow the rules.

Vocational rehabilitation programs are supposed to help all disabled people. They are supposed to help the people who need the most support, first. But lots of vocational rehabilitation programs only help some kinds of disabled people. Vocational rehabilitation programs usually do not want to help people with **intellectual disabilities** or **developmental disabilities**.

It is against the rules for vocational rehabilitation programs to leave out people because of what kind of disability they have.

Leaving a sheltered workshop could mean losing your Medicaid

There are different ways to get Medicaid. Many disabled people get Medicaid through another program called SSI. SSI is the **Supplemental Security Income** program. Disabled people cannot get SSI if they make too much money. A lot of disabled people in sheltered workshops get their Medicaid through SSI.

People who get Medicaid through SSI worry about making too much money. If they make too much money, they will stop getting SSI. Then, they will stop getting Medicaid as well. Disabled workers need Medicaid, because Medicaid pays for their supports. Without Medicaid, their supports would cost way too much money.

This can put pressure on the disabled workers to stay in sheltered workshops. Disabled workers might feel like they have to stay in the sheltered workshop, since it does not pay them much money. If they worked somewhere else, they might make too much money. Then, they would lose their Medicaid.

5. How can we solve these problems?

There are a lot of ways states can get rid of **sheltered workshops** and help more people get **real work for real pay**.

Through the legal system

Courts and judges are part of the **legal system**. The U.S. Department of Justice and the Supreme Court are part of the legal system. The legal system makes decisions about what is against the law.

Olmstead

Olmstead was a Supreme Court case in 1999.

There were 2 disabled women living in an institution. Their names were Lois Curtis and Elaine Wilson. Lois and Elaine did not want to live in the institution.

Lois and Elaine went to court to explain. They told the judges it was unfair to keep them in the institution. It was unfair because they could get the help they needed in their community instead.

Lois and Elaine won the case. The judges decided that disabled people have the right to get services in the community. Because Lois and Elaine won the case, states have to give people with disabilities a way to get services in the community instead of in institutions.

The *Olmstead* decision is important for people with disabilities. Many people talk about what *Olmstead* means. Most people talk about how *Olmstead* applies to housing for disabled people. But, the *Olmstead* case can support the right to **integrated employment** too.

There are groups who fight for the rights of disabled people. These groups are called **advocacy groups**. Some advocacy groups worked with the U.S. Department of Justice to sue states for having sheltered workshops. That means the legal system had to decide if the states are breaking the law.

These advocacy groups brought up the *Olmstead* case. They said the *Olmstead* decision applies to jobs, too. The advocacy groups said the *Olmstead* case shows segregated employment is against the law.

States are starting to act differently because of the **lawsuits**. Some states are closing their sheltered workshops. 3 states have changed their laws about wages. Companies in those states are not allowed to pay disabled workers less than the **minimum wage**.

Using the legal system is a good way to start closing down places like sheltered workshops.

What else can states do?

Change the way they use the state's Medicaid money

States get money from Medicaid to give health care and services to people with disabilities. States can make choices about Medicaid money in their state. States can choose how much money goes to helping disabled people get jobs.

Here is an example. One state might want to stop sheltered workshops. So, the state chooses to give more money to **supported employment** programs. The state gives less money to sheltered workshops.

There are groups that run sheltered workshops. A lot of times, these groups also run supported employment programs. The groups see that the state changed how much money they get from Medicaid. Now, the sheltered workshops do not get as much money. But, the supported employment program gets more money than before.

This makes the groups change too. They make their sheltered workshop program smaller. They make their supported employment program bigger. Eventually, they close their sheltered workshop. They only do supported employment.

This is one way to get rid of sheltered workshops.

Make it easier to keep Medicaid

Some disabled people worry about losing their Medicaid.

There are government programs to help disabled people keep their Medicaid if they get jobs. One program is called **Medicaid Buy-In**. Medicaid Buy-In programs give Medicaid to disabled people who work.

The Medicaid Buy-In program lets disabled workers make more money. They can make more than minimum wage and not lose their Medicaid. People have to pay to get health care from a Medicaid Buy-In program. But they do not have to pay a lot.

46 states have a Medicaid Buy-In program. Every state picks the rules for their own program.

Not a lot of people know about Medicaid Buy-In. We need to work on telling people with disabilities about these programs. That way, workers with disabilities will know we can get **real work for real pay** and also get Medicaid.

Example: Vermont

States need good examples of how to get rid of sheltered workshops for good. Vermont is a good example for other states to follow.

Vermont helped **Medicaid** work with **vocational rehabilitation** programs. They work together to help disabled people get supported employment.

Vermont takes some money from the vocational rehabilitation programs. Vermont uses this money to give people **supported employment**.

Medicaid adds more money. Vermont adds the Medicaid money to the supported employment money. The money helps people with disabilities get **integrated employment**. Disabled people work in the same place as non-disabled people and make the same wage.

Eventually, Vermont did not have any more sheltered workshops.

Vermont also changed how it does **day habilitation**. Now, the day habilitation programs are integrated instead of **segregated**. Now, disabled people in these programs get to choose what to do during the day. They get to be around non-disabled people.

6. What to Know About Work Requirements

What are work requirements?

Some people who do not make a lot of money get help from the government. A lot of these people are people with disabilities or older people.

The government has programs to help these people get what they need. **Medicaid** is one of the government programs. Medicaid helps people get health care. The **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** is another program. SNAP is also known as “food stamps.” SNAP helps people have money to buy food they need to live.

People in the government sometimes call programs like these “**benefits**”. Some people in government want to change how people get benefits. They want to add in “**work requirements**” for people who get benefits.

Work requirements mean that you have to have a job to get benefits. If you do not work, you will not get benefits. Work requirements would affect people who already get benefits now. If they do not work, they will lose their benefits.

Why do some people want work requirements?

There are a few reasons some people think that work requirements are a good idea.

A lot of people who support work requirements have never used benefits. So, they have wrong ideas about people who use benefits. Some people think that benefits make people not want to work. They say that since people can get benefits for food, housing, and health care, people don't have a reason to work. This is not true. We will talk more about that later.

There is another reason people want work requirements. They think work requirements would save money for the government. The government would not pay for benefits for people who do not work.

Really, it is more complicated than that. If there was a work requirement for Medicaid, the government would have to look at every person who uses Medicaid, and find out if they have a job or not. The government would have to spend a lot of money to pay people to find out. They might lose more money than they save.¹

Why are work requirements a bad idea?

Work requirements sound like a good idea to some people. But they do not actually help people get jobs.

Do people use benefits programs as an “excuse” not to work?

No.

Most people on benefits are already working. They still need the benefits because their jobs do not pay enough. Most people want to have a job and make money if they can.

People need money to pay for things like food, rent, and clothes. It is very hard to pay for everything you need with just benefits. So most people do not want to stay on benefits if they can help it.

¹ <https://www.cbpp.org/research/health/states-complex-medicaid-waivers-will-create-costly-bureaucracy-and-harm-eligible>

Why doesn't everybody work to get off benefits?

Some people who get benefits are not able to work. This includes:

- People with disabilities
- People who stay home to take care of their families
- People in school
- People who are retired

These groups of people have good reasons not to work. Trying to make these groups work would hurt them, not help them.

Here are some examples of people who would be hurt if they lost their benefits by not working:

- Ezra has a mental health disability. Ezra's disability makes it hard for him to work full-time right now. Medicaid helps Ezra pay for his medicine and therapist. Work requirements would make Ezra lose his Medicaid. Ezra would lose his Medicaid because he does not have a job. Without Medicaid, Ezra might not be able to pay for his medicine.
- Ravi takes care of his mom. Ravi's mom has Alzheimer's and needs a lot of help. Ravi had to stop working so he could take care of his mom.
- Monica is going to college. She needs Medicaid to pay for her wheelchair. If Monica had to work, she couldn't finish college.

What is stopping people from getting jobs?

Some people on benefits cannot find jobs, even though they want to. Here are some reasons it may be hard for someone to get a job:

- They may not have job experience.
- They might have been in prison.
- They may live in a place where there are not many jobs.
- A company might not want to hire someone because of who they are. For example, a company might not want to hire someone because of their disability.

Will work requirements help people get jobs?

People in government who want work requirements are not making plans to help people get jobs. They are not setting aside any new government money to help people get jobs.

Setting up work requirements doesn't help people find and keep jobs. Work requirements just punish people for not having jobs.

Do benefits help people get jobs?

Benefits help many people get ready to look for a job. For example, Medicaid can help someone get a job.

If someone is sick, they won't be able to keep a job. Getting health care through Medicaid can help them get well again. Then they can start to look for jobs.

Taking away someone's health care because they don't have a job does not help. It makes it even harder for them to get a job.

Will work requirements hurt people with disabilities?

People in government who want work requirements say things that sound good. But, the things they say are not always true.

They say that work requirements will not hurt people with disabilities. But, the government might not know a person has a disability. There are different reasons disabled people might get benefits. Some disabled people get benefits for reasons besides their disability. The government doesn't know that these people have a disability. So, they will be forced to work anyway, or they will lose their benefits.

There isn't a good way for the government to know who has a disability. First, a person has to get a doctor to say they have a disability. Then that person has to let the government know about their disability. This can take a lot of time and money. Going to the doctor can be expensive. You might have to go to the doctor many times. The doctor might say you do not have a disability.

Some disabled people do not have enough time or money to do that. So, the government does not know they are disabled. They could lose their benefits for not working.

Conclusion

Helping people find and keep jobs is a good goal. Work requirements do not help people find and keep jobs.

There are lots of ways people can get real work for real pay. But people need to have things like food, health care, and a place to live. People need to have these things before they can start looking for a job.

Government benefits help people get the things they need. We cannot help people by taking away the things they need. This will not help anyone get a job.

Work requirements do not work.

7. Glossary

advocacy groups

Groups of people who fight for equal rights for people, including people with disabilities.

benefits

Some people who do not make a lot of money get help from the government. Disabled people and older people can also get help from the government. The government has programs to help these people get what they need. These programs are “benefits.”

competitive employment

Competitive employment means that disabled workers are paid the same amount as a non-disabled worker doing the same work.

competitive and integrated employment

Employment where disabled people work in the same place as people without disabilities. Disabled workers do the same kind of work as the non-disabled workers. Workers with disabilities are paid the same amount as a non-disabled worker doing the same work.

congregate employment

Some jobs make disabled people work separate from non-disabled people. This is congregate employment. Segregated employment is another name for congregate employment.

day habilitation center

A daytime community-based program for adults with disabilities. These places offer activities for socializing and skill development, but do not provide employment. Sometimes these are called “day programs” or “adult day care.”

developmental disability

A lifelong disability that can begin from ages 0-21.

employment

Employment means that you work at a job and get paid for the work you do.

Employment First

Employment First is the idea that people with disabilities should be able to get real work for real pay.

enclave

A type of segregated employment. Disabled work in the same space as non-disabled people, but are not doing the same kind of work. Instead, the non-disabled workers supervise the workers with disabilities.

Fair Labor Standards Act

The Fair Labor Standards Act is a law about employment. The Fair Labor Standards Act did some helpful things. For example, the law made a minimum wage for everyone in the United States.

integrated employment

Integrated employment means that disabled people work in the same place as people without disabilities. Disabled workers do the same kind of work as the non-disabled workers. A job doesn't count as integrated employment unless it is also "competitive" employment.

intellectual disability

A disability that makes it harder for someone to learn and apply new skills, including communication, social, and self-care skills.

lawsuit

When you sue somebody, you are bringing a lawsuit against that person. A lawsuit is when you bring a disagreement between people to a court. The judge in the court makes a decision. The judge can force the other person to do something or to give you something.

legal system

The laws of a country and the ways those laws are enforced. This includes courts and judges.

Medicaid

A health care program in the United States. The U.S. government pays for Medicaid.

Medicaid Buy-In program

A program that offers low-cost Medicaid health care to disabled people who work. The program allows disabled workers to earn more money without the risk of losing their Medicaid.

minimum wage

The minimum wage is the smallest amount that your boss can pay you for your work. Right now, the minimum wage is \$7.25. The law says that workers have to be paid at least \$7.25 for every hour of work they do. It is illegal to pay somebody less than \$7.25 for an hour of work.

Olmstead

A Supreme Court case that decided disabled people have the right to get services in our communities.

policy

Policy means the laws and rules that the government makes.

productivity test

Sheltered workshops use a productivity test to decide how much money somebody gets.

The test looks at how much work a disabled person does in an hour. Then, it looks at how much work a non-disabled person does in an hour. The test compares how much work both people did.

real work for real pay

“Real work” means that people with disabilities can get the same kinds of jobs as non-disabled people. “Real pay” means disabled workers are paid the same amount as a non-disabled worker doing the same work.

Section 14(c)

Section 14(c) is part of the Fair Labor Standards Act. Section 14(c) lets companies pay people with disabilities less than the minimum wage. Companies get a special piece of paper called a 14(c) certificate. The certificate says that company is allowed to pay people with disabilities less than the minimum wage.

segregated

When groups of people are segregated, they are kept apart from each other.

segregated employment

Some jobs make disabled people work separate from non-disabled people. This is segregated employment.

sheltered workshop

Sheltered workshops are places that give disabled people jobs. But, these jobs do not help workers gain skills. Workers often have to do the same task over and over. For example, putting together a toy in a factory. The disabled people that work in sheltered workshops do not make much money. They are usually paid less than minimum wage for their work.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

SNAP is a federal nutrition program. It is sometimes known as “food stamps.” SNAP helps low-income people be able to buy food.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

A government program that gives financial support for low-income people and people with disabilities.

supported employment

Supported employment is a kind of integrated employment. Supported employment gives disabled workers support at their job. Supports help disabled people succeed at work.

vocational rehabilitation (VR)

Services that help disabled people find and keep employment.

wages

Wages are the money you get from working at your job.

work requirements

Work requirements are rules saying that you have to have a job to get benefits. If a state decides to use work requirements, many people in that state will not be able to get benefits.