

EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING AND WAGES

OVERVIEW

Competitive, integrated employment is a key part of living a meaningful and inclusive life in the community for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). However, the vast majority of people with IDD remain either unemployed or underemployed despite their ability, desire, and willingness to work.

WHY IT MATTERS

People with IDD can be employed in the community alongside people without disabilities and earn competitive wages. But too many barriers exist that lead to people with IDD being unemployed or underemployed, hindering their opportunity for financial stability. Currently, people often leave school with little to no community-based vocational experience or planning for transitioning from school to work. Many have been placed in “prevocational” programs and “disability-only” workshops where they are paid below the minimum wage and have little expectation of moving into competitive jobs where they can work alongside people without disabilities. These low expectations foster job discrimination.

When employed, few people with IDD have opportunities to advance, explore new possibilities, or, in their later years, retire. Unrealistically low limits on assets and earning make people fear losing vital public benefits if they work too many hours or earn too much. Lack of other services – like transportation or accommodations like assistive technology – can also hinder success.

WHAT THE ARC OF NM IS DOING

People with IDD should have all the supports necessary from individuals and systems to enable them to find and keep community jobs based on their preferences, interests, and strengths, work alongside people without disabilities, receive comparable wages, and be free from workplace discrimination.