



Connecting People. Advancing Employment.

**Why it is Time to Expand Supported Employment Services: A Fact Sheet for Public Policy Makers
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Supported employment is defined as paid work in typical public and private businesses with ongoing support services (often provided by a nonprofit service agency) to assure employer and employee satisfaction with the job performance and the employment relationship. Supported employment services are used for people with disabilities who may require ongoing support services to assure job effectiveness. Less than 75% of our U.S. citizens with developmental and intellectual disabilities such as Down syndrome, autism and cerebral palsy, are employed in real jobs even though a significant majority of these individuals can and want to work. Improvement in assessment and training methods has proven that all people who *want* to work *can* work when public dollars are spent wisely. *Why should public policy makers and employers consider expanding employment opportunities through supported employment services?*

1. Real work programs represent the wise use of limited public funds:

Numerous studies have illustrated that the annual cost of employing a person in a regular job is significantly less than the cost of keeping people segregated in alternative outmoded programs that presently dominate in most states. These outmoded programs have been shown to cost three times as much as re-investing those dollars in programs that develop customized jobs that meet employer needs while taking advantage of the strengths and preferences of people with developmental and cognitive disabilities.

2. Real jobs are nearly always preferred by people with disabilities:

It has become increasingly clear that once people with disabilities have real work opportunities combined with individualized ongoing customer service, they and their families prefer regular jobs over programs that segregate people to perform arts and crafts and/or unchallenging, underpaid, piece-rate jobs. These old-fashioned programs were fine before applied research demonstrated people with severe disabilities could work. However, we now know that the pride and sense of accomplishment that comes from real community employment results in a strong preference for that service option.

3. Real work for real pay is consistent with present civil rights law:

Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, which has been clarified by the Supreme Court's Olmstead ruling of 1999, requires that state and locally-funded programs must serve people with disabilities in the most integrated setting. People with disabilities have a right to be employed in real integrated jobs, as opposed to being needlessly segregated in sheltered workshops, day activity centers, or recreational programs. So...why are so few people with disabilities being employed in real jobs? Why are so many people continuing to be segregated in so many states? It takes strong state leadership with an understanding of best-practice employment services to make meaningful change within state service system bureaucracies. APSE: The Network on Employment can help with consultation on best-practice employment services, model state policy, and suggestions for state legislation.