

ignite thoughts into action

spark



Indiana Governor's Council
for People with Disabilities

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in this issue on
EMPLOYMENT



Local artist
paints his path



Sarah's job
gives her pride



Voc Rehab helps
achieve goals

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spark is a bi-monthly publication of the Indiana Governor's Council for People with Disabilities. An independent state agency that facilitates change, our mission is to promote public policy which leads to the independence, productivity and inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of society.

Suellen Jackson-Boner
Executive Director

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Policy and Communication

Employment is the key to accessing the community. Being a member of the workforce gives us a sense of pride, independence and security, as well as the power to purchase goods and services, bringing us closer to being full participants in our communities.

October was National Disability Employment Awareness Month, themed "Talent has no boundaries: Workforce diversity includes people with disabilities." People with disabilities bring a host of talents and skills that can contribute to a diverse workforce, enhancing the workplace atmosphere and adding to the bottom line.

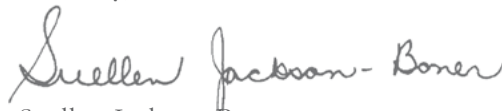
As more people with disabilities enter the workforce and earn competitive wages, the goal of a fully inclusive society is within reach. However, meaningful employment is still beyond grasp for many individuals due to shortcomings in other areas. Without reliable, affordable and accessible public transportation, for instance, getting to work and back is impossible.

For people with disabilities to compete for jobs with fair wages and benefits, we must concentrate on the larger picture and advocate for:


- Workforce development programs, vocational rehabilitation and work incentives
- Increased school-to-work outcomes
- Access to Medicaid waivers for long-term employment supports and outcomes
- Affordable, accessible public transportation to accommodate all citizens
- Full implementation of legislation that supports employment of people with disabilities
- Access to technology and adaptive equipment
- Economic development strategies which include full consideration of people with disabilities

I am pleased to introduce you to the Indiana Governor's Council for People with Disabilities' first edition of Spark, our new bi-monthly newsletter that replaces On Target. This newsletter will focus on a different topic each issue, providing you with more in-depth coverage of complex and important subjects. This issue tackles the subject of employment, and we hope you find the articles to be informative, inspirational and useful as you aspire to achieve your own employment goals.

Sincerely,



Suellen Jackson-Boner
Executive Director



Indianapolis artist paints his own path to employment

Walking into Wug Laku's art gallery, we're greeted by the sound of loud rock music. The gallery, located on the near northeast side of downtown Indianapolis, is lined with oil paintings that magnify the common butterfly through brilliant colors and extraordinary designs. Called "Patterns in Flight," the collection from Indianapolis artist Rachel Steely was the gallery's monthly feature.

Wug, a self-taught artist with bipolar disorder, appears from behind a white curtain separating his work studio from the gallery. He turns the music down a notch and walks us through his three-year-old space, called Wug Laku's Studio + Garage. He's just kicked off Steely's exhibition with "First Friday," an event that brings in about 200 visitors on the first Friday of each month to browse the galleries of nine artists who share space in the Circle Center Industrial Complex.

Wug coordinates the First Friday event each month to launch a new exhibition in his gallery, and he's rallied participation from the other building tenants, which include a pastry shop, a jeweler, a furniture designer and other artists.

In addition to showcasing other artists, Wug's own work — including furniture and waterstone wood decorative boxes — adorns

career opportunities for artists with disabilities.

Following a 10-year stint of rock-n-roll gigs in the 1970s — where he played keyboard, sang and worked the sound box for the Indianapolis band Roadmaster — Wug tried his hand at the traditional job market and found what most people with disabilities know all too well: it's tough.

"Being self-employed allows me to control my own circumstances. And there's plenty of assistance out there to help people get started."

– Wug Laku, owner, Wug Laku's Studio + Garage

the gallery. His talent extends from painting and other fine arts to photography and even light boxes assembled with materials Wug collects from nature. Beyond running his gallery and creating art in his studio, Wug also serves as the state chairman of ArtsWORK Indiana, a network of individuals who've come together to enhance

"The job market was difficult for me," Wug said. "I always had a knack for art and an interest in it, so I thought, 'Why not?'"

Wug got his start with the help of a Customized Employment Grant through the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP).

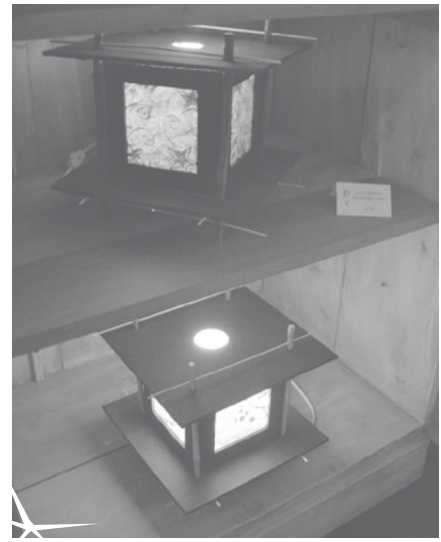
When those funds were depleted, he secured regular funding from Vocational Rehabilitation, which just ran out in May of this year. Wug's studio is now a 100 percent for-profit business.

"Being self-employed allows me to control my own circumstances," Wug said. "And there's plenty of assistance out there to help people get started."

To learn the ropes of being an entrepreneur, Wug took classes at the Business Ownership Initiative of Indiana in Indianapolis. He highly recommends other budding entrepreneurs prepare themselves before launching a new business. "Take business classes to make sure you know what you're doing, and research the industry you're interested in to make sure your business idea is viable," Wug said.

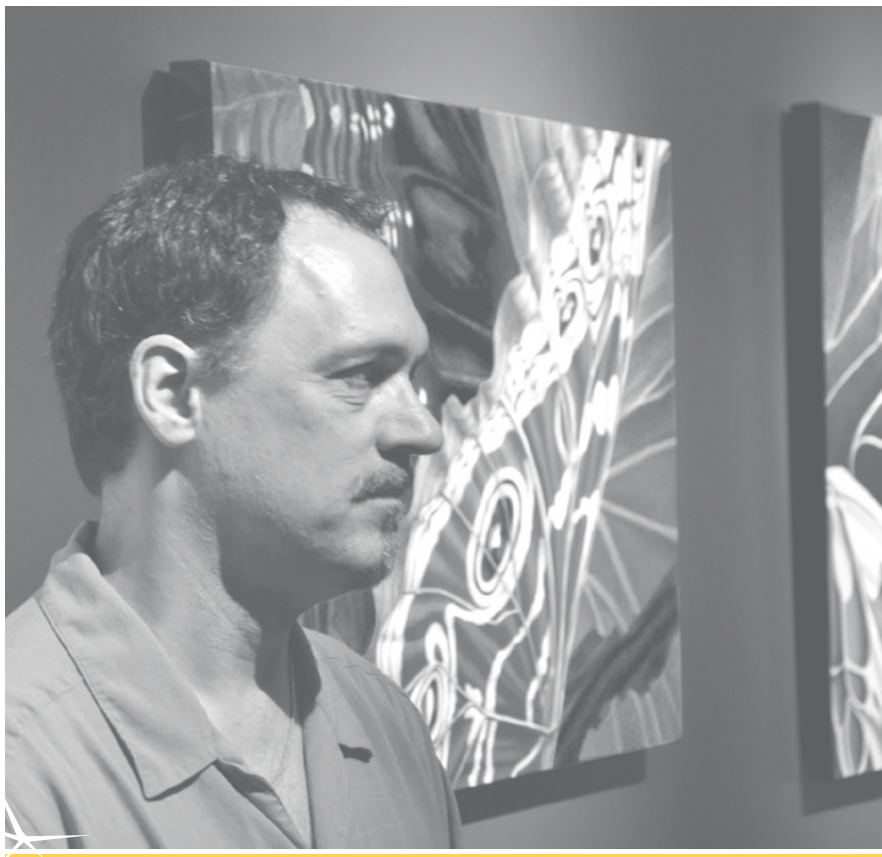
In addition to operating and managing his business, Wug also uses various mediums to promote the gallery and drive attendance. The gallery website, www.wlsandg.com, includes information and updates about the studio, as well as images and information about his work. The gallery's Facebook page features photos and videos, as well as updates about current and upcoming exhibitions. You can find the page by visiting www.Facebook.com and typing "Wug Laku's Studio + Garage" in the search box. Through networking, Wug has also built an extensive e-mail list to share information about studio happenings.

Wug's story reminds us that all people with disabilities have talents and skills that can open new windows of possibilities. Self-



Wug's gallery features some of his own work, including light boxes assembled with materials he collects from nature.

employment is a flexible career alternative that many individuals with disabilities can pursue to achieve their employment dreams and gain financial independence. To learn more about becoming an entrepreneur and the assistance available for business-starters with disabilities, visit the ODEP website at www.dol.gov/odep/categories/workforce/self.htm or call toll free, (866) 633-7365 (voice) or (877) 889-5627 (TTY).*



Wug's gallery featured local artist Rachel Steely's "Patterns in Flight" collection in August and September 2010.

The gallery website, www.wlsandg.com, includes information and updates about the studio, as well as images and information about Wug's work. The gallery's Facebook page features photos and videos, as well as updates about current and upcoming exhibitions. You can find the page by visiting www.Facebook.com and typing "Wug Laku's Studio + Garage" in the search box.

Business Leadership Network brings Indiana employers together

Increasing opportunities for people with disabilities

Two-thirds of Indiana's more than 270,000 working-age people with disabilities are unemployed. This is the highest unemployment rate of any minority group in the state,



according to the Indiana Business Leadership Network (INBLN).

To combat this disappointing statistic, INBLN is building relationships with local employers and growing a network of Hoosier businesses equipped with the tools and knowledge to employ people with disabilities. This unique program is reaching across Indiana through nine regional chapters.

At the national level, the Business Leadership Network (BLN) is

an employer-led initiative of the Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy. BLN educates employers on the benefits of hiring people with disabilities and provides them with useful resources to assist with their hiring efforts. In Indiana, the INBLN

to continue expanding to new areas of the state, as more and more Hoosier employers are showing interest in the initiative.

"With all the negative and disappointing talk about employment, it's important

"Our overall goal is simple: Get people with disabilities hired."

– Steve Savage, project consultant for the INBLN

connects participating Hoosier employers with prospective employees with disabilities, and offers guidance to help these businesses improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

"Our overall goal is simple: Get people with disabilities hired," said Steve Savage, project consultant for the INBLN. "But part of that is making sure employers are comfortable hiring people with disabilities and are aware of the advantages that come with it."

The INBLN consists of businesses committed to employing people with disabilities, as well as social service organizations that offer resources to employers and help them connect with potential employees. The Network plans

for people to know that this effort is growing tremendously," Savage said. "Businesses and communities are getting it, and we're reaching new parts of the state. Employers are becoming more comfortable hiring people with disabilities, and, therefore, are becoming more engaged."

INBLN is always looking for new, committed employers to join its network and continue to work toward better employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Indiana employers can learn more by visiting www.inbln.org.

Sarah's job brings pride and independence

Sarah Schelstraete is proud of her job, and rightfully so. You can hear it in her voice when she talks about her day-to-day work at Underwriters Laboratories, a product-safety testing company in South Bend, Ind.

Sarah, a 36-year-old woman with Down syndrome, landed her job at Underwriters when she was just a high school student. Now in her 17th year on the job, Sarah has successfully maintained her employment thanks to her outstanding work ethic, positive attitude and pure dedication.

"I love my job!" Sarah said. "It's very important to me."

Sarah works five days a week and is responsible for various tasks that keep the company operating smoothly, including helping with shipping, cleaning and storing materials.

Sarah's story is an excellent reminder that people with disabilities, with the right support, can be valuable and productive employees.

"She is probably one of our most dependable employees. She has a perfect attendance record," said Donna Martis, Sarah's supervisor, in an interview with WSBT-TV in South Bend.



Photo courtesy of WSBT-TV

Sarah Schelstraete is responsible for many different tasks at her job at Underwriters Laboratories, where she's worked for 17 years, in South Bend, Ind.

In addition to a steady income, Sarah receives health benefits and an IRA (Individual Retirement Account) through her employer.

"The ways this job has benefited Sarah are innumerable," said Myrna Schelstraete, Sarah's mom. "One of

As the fourth of five children, with two brothers and two sisters, Sarah grew up feeling like every other kid. "Her brothers didn't let her get by with any special treatment!" Myrna said. "She had to hold her own, and she's still good at that."

Myrna is proud of her daughter's independence and maturity, particularly in how she handles her work duties. She describes Sarah as being very smart, regimented and organized — all valuable qualities that are important to most employers.

"Sarah can do all the things that anyone else can do," Myrna said. "It may take her a little longer to learn how to do some things, but she never forgets." Sarah rides the city bus to and from work and packs her own lunches, too.

the biggest advantages is that she's accepted by everyone she works with. Nobody treats her differently or gives her special privileges. She's just like everyone else."

For other parents of children with disabilities, Myrna recommends they help their kids grow up to be excellent employees by teaching them to be well-mannered and responsible. She also suggests that parents think outside the box when helping their children

“It’s a shame that most people don’t realize how many abilities people with disabilities do have,” Myrna said. “Unfortunately, many people think individuals with disabilities are limited to jobs you most typically see them in, such as working for fast food chains, but

including karaoke. She loves watching movies and spending time with friends, too.

“Sarah is a very well-rounded person with many skills and abilities,” Myrna said. “People with disabilities, like Sarah, just need a chance to show what they can do.”

“Sarah is a very well-rounded person with many skills and abilities. People with disabilities, like Sarah, just need a chance to show what they can do.”

– Myrna Schelstraete, Sarah’s mother

with disabilities find employment. Rather than limiting your search to common places like restaurants and grocery stores, consider places that you do business with every day, such as doctor’s offices, hospitals and libraries.

there are so many other options if you just look for them.”

In addition to her work, Sarah enjoys all kinds of activities and hobbies, including bowling, playing basketball, being outdoors and everything to do with music,

Sarah’s story is an excellent reminder that people with disabilities, with the right support, can be valuable and productive employees. But this story isn’t just about inclusion; it’s also about empowerment. Not only is Sarah a respected employee, she’s earning a paycheck. She’s deciding what goods and services to buy, or not buy, and that is real power as a consumer.*

*To be truly and really independent
is to support ourselves by our own exertions.*

Jane Porter, novelist and playwright (1776 – 1850)





Using Voc Rehab to achieve employment goals

More than 4,000 Hoosiers with disabilities using Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) realized their dreams of employment in Fiscal Year (FY) 2009, according to Indiana's Commission on Rehabilitation Services' 2009 annual report.

While this number was down slightly from 4,392 in FY 2008, almost 95 percent of the individuals who secured employment in FY 2009 obtained a competitive job — earning an income at or above minimum wage.

Indiana's VRS program, part of the Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA), provides eligible individuals with customized services to help them prepare for, obtain or retain employment. The goal of VRS is to increase employment for people with disabilities by assisting with a variety of needs, including help with transitioning from school to work, accessing adaptive technology, finding proper job training and more.

Depending on an individual's employment goals and the assistance needed, VRS may provide the following services:

- Vocational counseling and guidance
- Medical treatment to correct or modify a physical or mental impairment
- Training (including vocational school, college or university, on-the-job and other training)

The goal of VRS is to increase employment for people with disabilities by assisting with a variety of needs, including help with transitioning from school to work, accessing adaptive technology, finding proper job training and more.

- Rehabilitation technology (assistive devices and services)
- Placement assistance and follow-up (including supported employment)

- Other necessary services to address a substantial impediment to employment

Thanks to funding assistance provided by VRS, Dan Ward, who acquired a disability in 1992 and now uses a wheelchair, was able to attend Ball State University in Muncie, Ind., to further his education. He now has a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and a master's degree in counseling psychology.

Following graduation, Ward was able to apply for jobs independently. He briefly worked at a mental health hospital before obtaining his current position at Indiana Protection and Advocacy

Services (IPAS), an independent state agency that protects and advocates for people with disabilities in a variety of areas.

Now, Ward is an advocacy specialist for IPAS and fields requests from people with disabilities seeking advocacy assistance who live in Marion County and southern Indiana.

“I’m an intake specialist, so I get the necessary information and send requests to a case review committee that determines if IPAS can provide assistance to those individuals,” Ward said. “Then, if a case is opened, a regional advocacy specialist is assigned to work with the individual one-on-one to provide services.” In addition to fielding requests, Ward also handles some individual cases.

Although IPAS doesn’t provide direct advocacy services for employment issues, the agency’s Client Assistance Program is able to help many individuals resolve complaints involving VRS.

Individuals are eligible for VRS assistance if it’s determined that:

- They have a physical or mental impairment;
- Their impairment is a substantial impediment to employment;
- They can benefit in terms of an employment outcome from the provision of VRS; and
- They require services to help prepare for gainful employment.

Individuals denied VRS services can contact IPAS and be assigned an advocate who can assist them through the appeals process. In addition, IPAS investigates complaints from individuals who’ve been approved for VRS services, but aren’t being given appropriate options to obtain assistance. IPAS also monitors the

quality and completeness of a person’s Individualized Plan for Employment, which is established by VRS to achieve the person’s job goals.



To receive VRS services, individuals must apply at one of the Indiana VRS offices (see the sidebar to the right for more information). For more information about VRS, visit www.in.gov/fssa/ddrs/2636.htm. To learn more about IPAS or request advocacy assistance, visit www.in.gov/ipas or call toll free, (800) 622-4845 (voice) or (800) 838-1131 (TTY).*

Applying for Voc Rehab Services

Individuals can apply for Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) at one of the 25 VRS offices throughout Indiana. Although individuals can be referred by family members, physicians or educational institutions, it’s not necessary to receive referrals to apply for services.

As part of the application process, a VRS counselor may request additional medical, educational and vocational information to determine eligibility. An applicant’s eligibility is typically determined within 60 days after an application is submitted.

Once an individual’s application is accepted, he or she meets with a counselor to formulate an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) based on job goals and necessary services. It can take anywhere from five months to five years to secure employment through the VRS process.

To find the VRS office near you, visit www.in.gov/fssa/ddrs/2636.htm and use the interactive map to locate contact information. Or, call toll free (800) 545-7763.*



Employment first! Indiana's agenda for integrated employment

By Pat Rogan, executive associate dean, Indiana University School of Education at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI)

Despite a shift in public policy toward integrated employment and increased awareness that people with disabilities can be productive, contributing employees in the community, many adults with intellectual/developmental disabilities remain congregated and segregated in sheltered work programs. These sheltered programs, including facility-based day programs and community-based non-work programs, are popping up throughout the United States. However, many, if not most, adults with disabilities would prefer to work in a job in the community.

A major hurdle for people with disabilities is being able to obtain a job in the community while also keeping their necessary government assistance. According to the Indiana Association for Persons in Supported Employment

(InAPSE), only about 25 percent of Hoosiers with disabilities who receive state and federal government services are employed in the community.

States vary tremendously in their policies, practices and rates regarding integrated employment outcomes. In recent years, a new movement has been created to

economy than when in sheltered programs.

The former Assistant Secretary of the Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, Neil Romano, issued a memorandum highlighting the importance of the nation's Employment First movement. According to the former secretary,

A major hurdle for people with disabilities is being able to obtain a job in the community while also keeping their necessary government assistance.

establish "Employment First" initiatives in the United States. The effort is aimed at shifting focus to community-based employment for people with disabilities, knowing that giving these individuals jobs in the community allows them to more effectively contribute to the

"Several states have moved forward to implement policies that focus on integrated, community-based employment earning at or above the minimum wage as its first option for individuals with intellectual and other developmental disabilities.

Using these ‘Employment First’ policies, states are tapping the skills and contributions of these individuals to match employer demand for a reliable, productive workforce through customized employment opportunities. In these employment-first states, sheltered employment with sub-minimum wages and non-work ‘day activities’ are no longer acceptable employment outcomes.”

In 2005, Indiana was the first state to host an Employment First summit. Government, business, education and other community leaders came together that year to develop a strategic plan for ensuring employment outcomes for all Hoosiers with disabilities. The group identified several solutions for reducing barriers to employment, including:

- Establish reliable, accessible and affordable transportation for employees to get to and from work.
- Connect to the economic development systems, such as Develop Indy (formerly Indianapolis Economic Development Inc.), to ensure employers have what they need to offer jobs to Hoosiers with disabilities.
- Develop more financial incentives for service providers to make competitive employment a shared outcome.
- Disseminate more information to employers about the benefits people with disabilities can bring to our economy.
- Coordinate integrated, community support for people to make living and working in the community the “norm.”

- Maximize opportunities for high school students with disabilities by improving transition supports and increasing work experience options.

In 2009, InAPSE released a report outlining progress made toward goals set during the 2005 summit. Some of these marks of progress include:

- Through the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant, Indiana is establishing regional business leadership networks across the state.
- The Medicaid Infrastructure Grant has also developed a number of resources to assist individuals in gaining economic self-sufficiency.



- Work experience and on-the-job training are now more accessible due to efforts by Indiana Vocational Rehabilitation.
- Project SEARCH, an initiative to create internship experiences for high school students with disabilities, was established in several parts of the state.

- New transition-planning systems have been established in nearly all Indiana schools.

In September 2010, Indiana hosted the 6th annual Employment First summit, titled the “National Organizational Change Forum: Employment First! The Audacity of Change.” State teams from across the country gathered to learn about making organizational changes to transition focus from sheltered to integrated employment, as well as to develop Employment First plans.

As Indiana strives to increase employment outcomes for people with disabilities, we must remain focused on integrated employment and aim to provide more job opportunities in our communities. It is too often a common misconception that people with disabilities must be limited to sheltered work programs. We must value Hoosiers with disabilities as productive, contributing members of our society and recognize the benefits that these individuals’ talents and abilities can bring to our communities.

To view Indiana’s current Employment First plan, visit www.inapse.org.*

Survey reveals record-breaking unemployment rates

A new survey reveals that the employment gap between people with and without disabilities is gradually narrowing, but the unemployment rates of both groups are staggeringly high. The 2010 Survey of Americans with Disabilities found that just 21 percent of working-age people with disabilities are employed, compared to 59 percent of those without disabilities. The 38 percentage-point difference has decreased from 49 points in 2000 and 43 points in 2004.

According to the survey, the overall unemployment rate is the highest it's been since 1986, reflecting the hardships all Americans are facing due to the slumping economy (see graph). Over the course of 24 years, the survey — sponsored by the Kessler Foundation and the National Organization on Disability (NOD) — has been conducted six times to assess the quality of life of Americans with disabilities based on “significant life activities,” such as health care and education.

Although Americans with and without disabilities continue to experience vast lifestyle and economic differences, research indicates a slow but consistent move toward closing some of those gaps. Of the 10 areas studied, employment continued

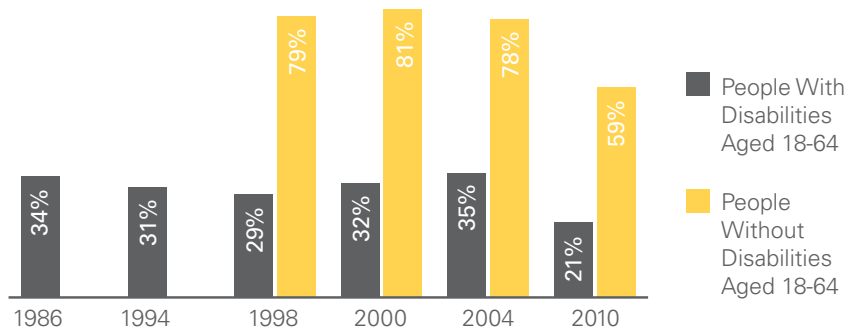
to have the largest gap, followed by Internet usage — with 54 percent of people with disabilities accessing the Internet compared to 85 percent of those without disabilities.

Directly linked to employment, and exacerbated by the economic downturn, people with disabilities are more than twice as likely to be living in poverty, with

addition to the current economic situation. Fifty-six percent say they can't find a job in their line of work, 37 percent say they can't get necessary accommodations to effectively perform in the workplace, and 23 percent say they fear losing health benefits if they get a job.

The research also suggests that employment discrimination based

Working Full-time or Part-time



34 percent having an annual household income of \$15,000 or less. Education outcomes are trending upward, however, with 82 percent of people with disabilities graduating from high school in 2010, up from 61 percent in 1986. The percentage of people with disabilities completing college has also increased to 19 percent in 2010, up from 14 percent in 2004.

Survey respondents cited other circumstances that are interfering with finding employment, in

on disability is declining. Forty-three percent of respondents claim they've experienced some type of job discrimination in their life, but that number drops to 26 percent when reviewing the respondents' experiences in the last five years.

To read the full results and learn more about the survey, visit www.2010disabilitysurveys.org or call NOD at (202) 293-5960.*

Obama orders more federal job hires of people with disabilities

The White House is taking action to improve federal employment opportunities for people with disabilities. President Barack Obama issued an executive order on July 26, 2010 — the 20th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act — insisting federal agencies create and implement plans to increase employment of people with disabilities.

Fifty-four million people in America live with disabilities, including more than 270,000 working-age Hoosiers, according to the Indiana Business Leadership Network. If the order is enforced and its goals are successfully achieved, federal agencies together will have hired 100,000 more people with disabilities in the next five years. Former President Bill Clinton originally established this goal in a 2000 executive order, but, according to Obama, few steps were taken to implement the order and little came of the effort.

Under President Obama's new order, the head of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) will be responsible for designing strategies to recruit and hire people with disabilities in the coming months. Federal agencies are also tasked with markedly improving retention of employees with disabilities by adjusting training methods and providing accessible technology and workspaces. And, the U.S. Secretary of Labor must strategize ways to increase rehiring of employees who have sustained injuries at work.

Obama hopes to track the efforts of federal agencies by ordering them to record their progress in published reports on the OPM website at www.opm.gov. To read the executive order, go to www.whitehouse.gov and click on "Presidential Actions" under the "Briefing Room" tab.*

To learn more about federal employment options and application processes, visit www.opm.gov/disability or call (202) 606-1800 (voice) or (202) 606-2532 (TTY). For more information about federal employment opportunities, as well as resume resources and interview tips, visit www.federaljobs.net.

Applying for federal employment

Job seekers with disabilities can apply for federal government positions through either a competitive or non-competitive process. The competitive process is a traditional application method. Individuals can search for available positions and apply for jobs at www.usajobs.opm.gov. The application process can be completed by filling out the Federal Job Search and Application Form or by using the Online Resume Builder.

Individuals with certain cognitive or severe physical disabilities can apply for jobs non-competitively by going through the government's "selective placement" program. Job seekers who wish to go this route must have proof of disability from one of the following: a licensed medical professional; a licensed vocational rehabilitation specialist; or any federal, state or other agency that issues or provides disability benefits. These individuals can contact the federal agency where they wish to work and speak with a selective placement or disability employment coordinator.*

Center on Community Living and Careers helps people take steps toward employment

Achieving employment and education goals for people with disabilities is the Center on Community Living and Careers' (CCLC) driving mission. As part of the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community at Indiana University, CCLC partners with state agencies and organizations, as well as Indiana schools and employers, to give people with disabilities more opportunities to participate in their communities.

Project SEARCH is one such initiative, providing individuals with disabilities in their last year of high school with quality internship experiences to help them prepare for competitive, "real world" jobs.

Based on a model developed at Cincinnati Children's Hospital, Project SEARCH is a collaborative effort among CCLC, Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS), employers and school systems. The program helps students build their resumes and portfolios to ultimately obtain jobs with the companies they intern with, or with related businesses. Students who don't obtain employment at the end of their internships receive free job placement services.

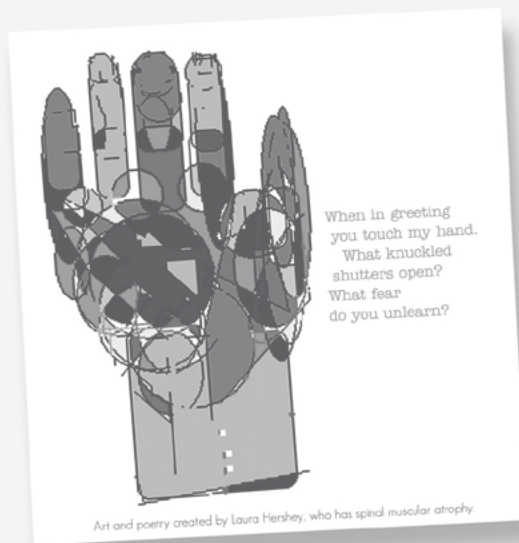
CCLC also provides assistance and resources for students graduating from high school and transitioning to higher education. For instance, it houses the Indiana

Secondary Transition Resource Center, an initiative of the Indiana Department of Education that offers professional development activities such as webinars and workshops.

Publications and other resources to guide people with disabilities and their parents in pursuing secondary education and employment are available free of charge. To learn more about CCLC's initiatives and find available resources, visit www.iidc.indiana.edu and click on "Center on Community Living and Careers" in the left column. Or, call (800) 825-4733 (toll free, voice) or (812) 855-9396 (TTY).*

Talent has no boundaries:

Workforce diversity includes people with disabilities



NDEAM2010
National Disability Employment Awareness Month
www.dol.gov/odep



Employment resources

Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS)

www.in.gov/fssa/ddrs/2636.htm
(877) 241-8144

VRS coordinates and provides a variety of services, including counseling, evaluation and job placement services for people with disabilities. There are 25 VRS offices throughout Indiana. To find office locations, visit the website and view the interactive map. Click on your region to find contact information for the office near you.

The Indiana Association of People in Supported Employment (InAPSE)

www.inapse.org
(317) 466-1000

This membership organization is made up of supported employment professionals, consumers, family members, advocates and others to help provide resources, including employment specialists, for people with disabilities. InAPSE is a national non-profit organization that focuses on integrated employment and career advancement opportunities for people with disabilities.

M.E.D. Works

www.medworks.in.gov
(317) 233-4455 (Indiana Office of Medicaid Policy and Planning)

Indiana's Medicaid buy-in program allows working people with disabilities to keep their health care benefits under Medicaid even though they obtain employment. To be eligible, people with disabilities must be between the

ages of 16 and 64, meet Indiana Medicaid income and resource guidelines, and meet the Indiana Medicaid definition of "disability" regardless of employment status.

Job Accommodation Network (JAN)

www.askjan.org
Toll free (800) 526-7234 (voice),
(877) 781-9403 (TTY)

If you have any questions about workplace accommodations, the Americans with Disabilities Act or other legislation, the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) offers free, expert and confidential advice on workplace accommodations and disability employment issues.

Indiana Works / Work Incentive Planning and Assistance (WIPA)

Northern and central Indiana:
Toll free (866) 646-8161 (voice),
(800) 743-3333 (TTY);
Southern Indiana:
Toll free (800) 206-6610 (voice).

WIPA, commonly referred to as "Indiana Works," provides benefits counseling for individuals who are interested in employment and want to understand how obtaining a job would affect their disability benefits from the Social Security Administration. Contact one of the regional offices listed above to learn more and be assigned a benefits counselor.

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)

www.EEOC.gov
info@eeoc.gov
Indianapolis district office:
Toll free (800) 669-4000 (voice),
(800) 669-6820 (TTY)

The EEOC enforces laws that make it illegal to discriminate against employees and potential employees based on disability, among other criteria. If you think you have been discriminated against and wish to file a claim, contact the Indianapolis EEOC district office.

U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)

www.dol.gov/odep
Toll free (866) 633-7365 (voice),
(877) 889-5627 (TTY)

ODEP implements many national employment initiatives to help people with disabilities access job opportunities, training programs and other assistance. The website offers a variety of resources and helpful links, including an online Employability Checkup tool that estimates your chances of finding a job in a particular field based on your education and experience, desired income level and preferred employment location. Create your profile at www.careerinfonet.org/employabilitycheckup, and you'll be led to a list of job banks and job training resources in your state.

ignite thoughts into action

spark

We welcome your suggestions
for newsletter content and
ideas concerning the actions
of the Council.

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