

THE 2008 DISABILITY POLICY SEMINAR

THE ARC, AAIDD, AUCD,
UCP AND NACDD

FACT SHEET

EMPLOYMENT

Background

Working age people with disabilities are among the most unemployed and underemployed segments of our society. The vast majority of these individuals can work and want to work. The state vocational rehabilitation (VR) program is significantly under funded to meet the employment needs of hundreds of thousands of individuals with severe disabilities who need VR services to obtain employment. Many individuals with disabilities could also greatly benefit from the employment and training services delivered through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) One-Stop system. Physical and programmatic access to WIA services is woefully lacking for individuals with disabilities, despite Federal requirements that such services be accessible. Bills to reauthorize WIA and VR have been considered in the 108th and 109th Congresses, but not enacted. These bills have included language strengthening transition services for special education students and improving physical and programmatic access to one-stops, two important priorities of the disability community.

Action Taken by Congress and the Administration

Legislation to reauthorize WIA and Vocational Rehabilitation has yet to be introduced in the 110th Congress. The President has once again included recommendations for block granting several Department of Labor programs (adult employment, youth employment, employment services and dislocated worker program) in his budget request for FY 2009. The FY 2009 request again proposed major cuts in critical employment programs, including a \$15.2 million cut to the Office of Disability Employment Policy (from \$27.2 in FY 2008 to a proposed \$12.0 in FY 09), eliminating the DOL Work Incentive Grant program (\$14.4 million in FY 2008) and the Supported Employment State Grant Program (\$29.2 million in FY 2008).

Senate staff have released a draft vocational rehabilitation act reauthorization bill for feedback. Highlights of the bill include major transition changes as proposed in previous bills and modifications to the supported employment program including removing the 18 month time limit for VR funds to be used for supported employment.

Recommendations

The Congress should:

- Place a high priority on reauthorizing WIA and VR;
- Oppose the Administration's proposal to block grant employment programs at the Department of Labor;

- Oppose the Administration's proposal to eliminate the Supported Employment State Grant Program;
- Increase funding for the VR system, including restoring and increasing funding for Supported Employment State Grant program, Projects with Industry, the Office of Disability Employment Policy and the Work Incentive Grant program;
- Assure that people with disabilities have physical and programmatic access to the WIA system;
- Improve transition services by strengthening the VR role in the transition from school to adult life for students with disabilities, particularly requiring VR counselors to actively participate in the IEP process.

Relevant Committees

House Appropriations Committee

House Education and Labor (WIA and VR)

Senate Appropriations Committee

Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (WIA and VR)

For more information, please contact The Arc and United Cerebral Palsy Disability Policy Collaboration (202-783-2229), Association of University Centers on Disabilities (301-588-8252), American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (202-387-1968), or National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (703-739-4400).

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