

Data and Reporting from the Let's Get to Work Project

Wisconsin is one of 8 states awarded a Partnerships in Employment grant to improve community employment outcomes for youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) who are transitioning from high school to the workforce. The project focuses on improving, developing, and implementing policies and practices that raise community expectations and overall employment outcomes for youth with I/DD.

Let's Get to Work Outcomes from School Pilot Sites

- ⊙ **Tripled the number of LGTW students with paid jobs¹ in their communities in the first year.**
- ⊙ **After 3 years, more than 60% of LGTW students are working in their communities.**
- ⊙ **More LGTW students are participating in typical school and community activities with their peers without disabilities (a nearly 50% increase in integrated activities¹).**
- ⊙ **Family training doubled the number of parents who believe their child can work in the community¹.**
- ⊙ **Students reported working in the community makes their life better².**
- ⊙ **Community members report they believe that youth with disabilities can be employed in their community³. 25% of respondents are employers.**
- ⊙ **Number of employers who hired LGTW students nearly doubled within six months.**



For more information, please contact Beth Swedeen at beth.swedeen@wisconsin.gov or visit www.letsgettoworkwi.org.

¹ Research demonstrates that high family expectations, participation in integrated activities, and having held a paid, community-based job while still in high school were all factors strongly correlated with post-school employment success (Test et al, 2009). Data analyzed every 6 months after baseline.

² Measured annually using the Quality of Life Questionnaire (QOL.Q)

³ Respondents rated this question a 4.7 out of 5.

Let's Get to Work Policy and Practice Changes that Matter

1. Early Engagement with Vocational Rehabilitation

Federal guidance should be issued that specifies standards and indicators for VR in serving transition-age youth. New research shows that timely VR services play an important early intervention role by diverting workers with disabilities from SSDI and perhaps SSI cash benefits.

2. Employer Engagement

Federal agencies must develop Vocational Rehabilitation incentives like Wisconsin's Youth On the Job Training (YOJT) that has engaged new employers who have never hired people with disabilities. The YOJT program allows for a wage subsidy up to 100% for up to 500 hours while a youth learns the job he/she has been offered. The expected outcome is the youth will be hired permanently.

3. School and Community Inclusion

Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has provided guidance on how least restrictive environment (LRE)⁴ pertains to work placements, building upon research that supports early community-based employment experiences for youth. However school districts and states require clear federal direction on how to follow these guidelines. State performance plan indicators 5, 13 and 14 are not sufficient to support improvement of transition practices so direction must include specific measures that show inclusive practices are occurring as well as specific outcome reporting requirements.

4. Work Incentives Benefits Counseling

Federally funded programs must support and require that every student and their family have a conversation with a trained Work Incentive Benefits Specialist prior to the age of 18 to help families fully understand the benefits of going to work. Each state's Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) program must be funded and able to adequately serve all youth in the state.

5. Long Term Employment Supports

Once a student exits school, the long term care support system must take responsibility for providing community based employment supports such as job coaching, personal care, and transportation. Community based employment supports must be mandated as the first and preferred outcome to allow people with disabilities to live meaningful lives just like an individual without a disability.



⁴ Guidance can be found at <http://www.letsgettoworkwi.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/LRE-Guidance-in-work-placements-on-letterhead.pdf>.