



## WORKFORCE, CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION, AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Federal funding supports workforce training, career and technical education, and postsecondary education opportunities for millions of Americans, including students and adults with learning disabilities. These programs provide information, resources, training and educational services designed to secure and improve employment opportunities as well as financial aid to attend an institution of higher education to pursue a certificate or degree. In total these programs create much of the network that individuals use to receive training and improve their educational skills with the goal of acquiring employment or improving their employment situation.

While many of these programs and the services they provide are not specific to individuals with learning disabilities (LD), how they are structured and the services they provide impact whether individuals with learning disabilities are able to utilize or benefit from their offerings. Too many students fail to persist and graduate from college or training program with a certificate or degree. This problem is more pervasive for individuals with disabilities.

In order to ensure that the maximum number of students and adults with LD are employed, we offer the following policy recommendations:

**1. Federal workforce programs, including the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), should be designed to ensure students with learning disabilities are able to take advantage of services and program offerings.**

- Too often individuals with learning disabilities such as dyslexia will encounter text heavy environments that may prove challenging for them to fully access. Workforce programs must ensure that individuals with learning disabilities can fully participate and access services.

Examples of this include:

- Local Workforce Boards should ensure that a lack of literacy skills is not a barrier to accessing workforce training services.
  - Providers of youth services should be required to focus on the literacy needs of youth receiving services under WIA.
  - Local adult education programs must demonstrate in their plan that individuals with learning disabilities who struggle to benefit from regular instruction will be provided more intensive instruction.
- Governing structures like Workforce Boards do not actively plan for serving individuals with learning disabilities, and those individuals are often automatically referred to vocational rehabilitation. All federal workforce programs need to be equipped to serve individuals with learning disabilities. Examples of this include:
    - Local Workforce Boards should coordinate services provided in local areas with transition and related services provided to students with disabilities by school districts.



- 2. Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs can provide exceptional learning opportunities for high school and community college students.**
  - There has been improvement to the academic rigor of CTE programs, but these programs should be required to ensure that all students, including students with learning disabilities are expected to be college and career ready.
  - Students with learning disabilities should have all the options that Career and Technical Education programs can provide them, but should not be pushed into a CTE program, or have that decision made for them, at too young of an age.
  - Data is needed to determine if there is an overrepresentation of students with learning disabilities in CTE programs, and if that overrepresentation might be having an impact on their graduation rate, or the rate at which they are achieving alternative certificates rather than regular high school diplomas.
  
- 3. Federal Student Aid programs provide critical help for many low and middle income students to afford a college education.**
  - Institutions of higher education should provide added and sufficient supports and services to ensure that individuals with learning disabilities can complete their college education.
  
- 4. More needs to be done to support students with learning disabilities as they transition from high school to institutions of higher education.**
  - Coordination between high schools, career and technical training programs, work-based learning, and community college should be strengthened to ensure students with LD have viable options post high school.
  - Institutions of higher education should be required to ensure that individuals with learning disabilities receive the support services they need to graduate.
  - Support services at institutions of higher education should be designed to be useable by students with learning disabilities, as well as low-income students and first-generation students.