

# Dept. of Workforce Development: Three-agency collaboration supports higher employment rates for individuals with disabilities

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MADISON – A recent report shows that a collaboration between the state Department of Workforce Development (DWD), Department of Health Services (DHS), and the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) is supporting higher employment rates for Wisconsin residents with disabilities working in a competitive integrated employment setting.

[2017 Wisconsin Act 178](#) requires the three state agencies to collaborate in the development of a joint plan and annual reporting to increase Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) opportunities. CIE is defined as an individual with disability working in a full or part-time position with individuals without a disability.

The [Competitive Integrated Employment \(CIE\) SFY 2023 Report](#) found:

- 1,661 unique individuals were served by all three state agencies in state fiscal year 2022.
- Individuals receiving Medicaid Home and Community Based Services saw 20 percent higher employment rates when they received vocational rehabilitation services.
- Individuals in prime working age (25-54) had a 34 percent higher employment rate when they were connected to vocational rehabilitation services. Individuals 55-64 had a 29 percent higher employment rate when connected to VR services.

“The work of the cross-agency Competitive Integrated Employment team is

paramount to ensuring all Wisconsinites have the resources and support to achieve their career goals,” said DWD Secretary Amy Pechacek. “DWD is proud to continue our partnerships with other state agencies to develop and strengthen Wisconsin’s workforce.”

“I am incredibly grateful for this collaboration with our state agency partners, and for the dedication our state has to increasing these meaningful employment opportunities for Wisconsinites with disabilities,” State Superintendent Dr. Jill Underly said. “This is a great example of state government doing innovative and important work in partnership with schools and employers across our state, and I am proud that the DPI is a part of it.”

“Data show this collaboration brings better employment outcomes for the people we serve participating in Medicaid Home and Community Based Service waivers. And that shows we are better together,” said DHS Secretary-designee Kirsten Johnson. “DHS is pleased to join our partners at DPI and DWD to develop and support innovation and looks forward to the continued coordination.”

The [report](#) features new data visualizations that provide an in-depth analysis of employment outcomes for people with disabilities in Wisconsin.

To continue improving CIE outcomes, the departments have developed three performance improvement targets and cross-agency objectives to implement collaboratively. The [2024-25 Joint CIE Plan](#) renews these performance improvement targets with a focus on three areas:

- Increase awareness that work is possible for people with disabilities by promoting CIE opportunities using targeted outreach and education.
- Align state and local service delivery systems and strengthen coordination to increase CIE opportunities for people with disabilities.
- Prepare students for careers by participating in K-12 career pathways that include a sequence of Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses and work-based learning experiences while connecting them to support services both during and after high school.

Visit the [CIE webpage](#) to view the latest joint plan and gather resources for promoting employment outcomes for students with disabilities.