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Indiana Report Reveals Continued Shift in Day and Employment Services for People with Disabilities

BLOOMINGTON, Ind. — A new statewide report from the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community at Indiana University Bloomington shows a continued shift in how Hoosiers with intellectual and developmental disabilities participate in employment and day services, with half now spending the majority of their time in nonemployment day programs.

The 2026 Indiana Day and Employment Services Outcomes System Report analyzed data from 11,233 individuals receiving services across the state. Among those individuals, 50% participated primarily in nonemployment day programs, up from 41% in 2024 and 44% in 2025. Meanwhile, participation in facility-based services declined from 9% in 2024 to 5% in 2026. Competitive integrated employment remained flat at 21%.

"The DESOS data give us an important statewide picture of where people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are spending their time and how those patterns are changing," said Teresa Grossi, Ph.D., one of the report's authors. "The data helps providers of services and funding sources to determine priorities."

"For the past several years, the focus has been on reducing entities paying subminimum wage such as sheltered workshops," Grossi said. "The data now shows the continued work in developing meaning day programming and career planning for individuals who want to enter competitive employment."

Competitive integrated employment, which the report defines as working in a local business or industry alongside nondisabled coworkers for competitive wages, accounted for 2,400 individuals. Those workers averaged 19 hours per week and earned an average hourly wage of $12.51.

The report also found 2,577 individuals, or 23%, were participating in alternatives to employment. Of those, 77%, or 1,984 individuals, were looking for a job or participating in job exploration activities, including work-based learning and work experiences.

Employment and day service patterns also varied by age. Among individuals ages 18 to 24, 42% were participating in alternatives to employment, compared with 32% in nonemployment day programs and 24% in competitive integrated employment. The report notes that individuals in this age group are more likely to participate in school programs and/or Vocational Rehabilitation pre-employment transition services.

For older age groups, nonemployment day programs were increasingly common. They represented the primary environment for 51% of individuals ages 30 to 39, 53% of those ages 40 to 49, 56% of those ages 50 to 59 and 66% of individuals age 60 and older.

The report raises questions about what meaningful engagement looks like as participation in nonemployment day programs increases. It also identifies case managers and families as important influences in referrals to services, highlighting the need to better understand how employment and community-based opportunities are presented to individuals with disabilities and their families.

The annual DESOS report is produced by the IIDC and submitted to the Bureau of Disabilities Services and Bureau of Rehabilitation Services within the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration's Division of Disability, Aging, and Rehabilitative Services.

The 2026 report was authored by Teresa Grossi, Ph.D., John Andresen, Ph.D., and Derek Nord, Ph.D. Eighty-five service providers participated in this year's data collection, representing 80% of providers offering day and/or employment services included in the report.

The Indiana Institute on Disability and Community at Indiana University Bloomington is one of the nation's federally designated University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities. Since 1970, the Institute and its seven Centers have worked to create a world for all abilities through research, education, and service. The Institute's mission is to support disability communities at every stage of life by navigating and removing systemic barriers; connecting people, systems, and resources; and advancing research and applying insights as hands-on services, tools, and guidance that improve lives.

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