



Virginia Board for People with Disabilities

Assessment of Virginia's **BARRIERS TO COMPETITIVE, INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT**

Real work. Real pay.
Equal opportunity.

PURPOSE OF THIS ASSESSMENT

We looked at what makes it hard for people with disabilities to get and keep competitive, integrated employment—and how to remove those barriers.

What Is Competitive, Integrated Employment?

- A job in the community where people with and without disabilities work together
- Pay that is the same as others doing similar work
- Opportunities for independence, choice and inclusion
- Employment that is part of a person's path to a better quality of life

Key Findings and Recommendations

1. Low Expectations

Some parents, caregivers and support staff expect less from people with disabilities because they worry about safety or lack of support.

Recommendations:

- Create a program that gives parents and caregivers tools, information and emotional support to help their child succeed at work.
- Require all residential service providers and staff to receive training on how to support employment goals.
- Give all support coordinators regular training on the importance of employment goals.

2. Limited Knowledge of Services

Many people do not know what employment services are available or how to get them. Confusing and inconsistent processes make it even harder.

Recommendations:

- Offer benefits training to parents before their child leaves school so they understand how work can affect benefits.
- Make sure all offices use the same steps and provide the same information by having the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services and the Department for Behavioral Health and Developmental Services collaborate internally.

3. Transportation Challenges

Many people with disabilities cannot find or keep jobs because transportation is limited, unreliable or inaccessible—especially in rural areas.

Recommendations:

- Ask the General Assembly to direct JLARC to study transportation options for people with disabilities.
- Use the study results to create a plan for improving and expanding transportation services.