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March 23, 2016

RespectAbility – Public Comments – Alabama Combined State Plan

“WHEREAS, it is important to educate communities and employers about the competencies, capabilities and rights of young people with disabilities who are making the transition from teenager to adult; and

WHEREAS, individuals with disabilities are contributing and valued residents of Alabama who exercise meaningful personal choices as family members, employees, residents, volunteers, consumers and friends.” – [Gov. Robert Bentley, March 1, 2016](#)

RespectAbility is pleased to submit the following comments regarding the current draft of Alabama’s Combined State Plan as required under Section 102 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). We are pleased to have this opportunity to offer our comments, raise our questions, and provide our suggestions about the content of the state plan.

Today Alabama has the opportunity to work hard to improve outcomes in terms of competitive, integrated employment for people with disabilities. Currently, your state ranks 49th in the country in terms of their employment rate of people with disabilities. **Only 27.2% of the approximate 422,549 working age Alabamians with disabilities are employed. Further, there are over 21,200 youth ages 16-20 with disabilities and each year a quarter of them will age out of school into an uncertain future.**

Thanks to WIOA, Alabama has the chance to invest resources in successful models and implement best practices to expand job opportunities for people with disabilities. Your state has much to learn from other states that have worked hard to achieve improved employment outcomes. Other states have higher than 50% employment rates for their citizens with disabilities. [States like the Dakotas, Alaska, and Wyoming have achieved increase results by putting best practices into places.](#) The experience of these states shows ways that Alabama can dramatically improve their outcomes. **Likewise, we are also seeing pockets of excellence around innovative youth programs designed to address disability employment in [Georgia](#), [Nevada](#), and [Kentucky](#).**

To help the states succeed in this [process we developed a resource called the Disability Employment First Planning Tool](#). This document details best practices and effective models. This toolkit contains models that are proven to work, be cost effective to implement, and be successful. **We have developed an extensive collection of data on disability and employment in Alabama (include hyperlink).** That information is attached to our comments.

Our public comments on Alabama WIOA State Plan are structured around those points where greater clarity, precision, and data are needed to ensure that people with disabilities will be better equipped to pursue the American Dream. From the accessibility of the workforce system to employer engagement to investing in transition programs for youth with disabilities, our comments are intended to help your state push hard to see improved integrated employment outcomes for Arizonans with disabilities.

1. Make sure that the best data points, especially those around youth with disabilities as well as Labor Force Participation Rates (LFPRs) are in your Workforce Analysis:

Tracking unemployment information (which only reflects people actively looking for jobs) and job placements (which only monitors people who interface directly with the workforce system) is necessary, but not sufficient to drive true performance metrics that will create success. Alabama's state plan provides us with extremely detailed workforce information for each county including its growing sectors and projected growth. This information will be extremely useful in expanding the workforce.

The vast majority of people with disabilities want to work, just like anyone else. However, only 27.2% of working age people with disabilities are in the workforce in Alabama, compared to 71.3% of people without disabilities who are in the workforce. That means there is a 44.1 percentage point gap in the Labor Force Participation Rates. However, there is huge variation between the states. [For example, people with disabilities are twice as likely to be employed in some states as others.](#) It is impossible to create the success needed without the right data and performance metrics.

There are several data points on people with disabilities woven through the current draft of Alabama's Combined State Plan. For example, on Table 16 Unemployment Rate by Demographics on page 33, the State Plan reports a staggering "17.20%" unemployment rate for people "With any disability." The Plan then goes on to look in much closer detail at trends in Labor Force Participation Rates in Alabama, regional variations, and more specific detail on different age groups. **In particular, we are pleased to see the attention given on page 34 of the Combined State Plan to the statistics of people with disabilities who are succeeding in the labor force.** This information, given that it is broken down by disability type, will be very useful for your workforce system moving forward. The types of supports that a job seeker with a disability needs to succeed in the labor force depend very much on the type of disability that they have. We often find that people who are blind or have vision loss are employed at higher rates than people with self-care or independent living disabilities. Similarly, we find that people with hearing differences are also employed at higher rates than are people with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

Figure 1.

Alabama Performance Metrics on Jobs for PWDs.



Gov. Robert Bentley (R)

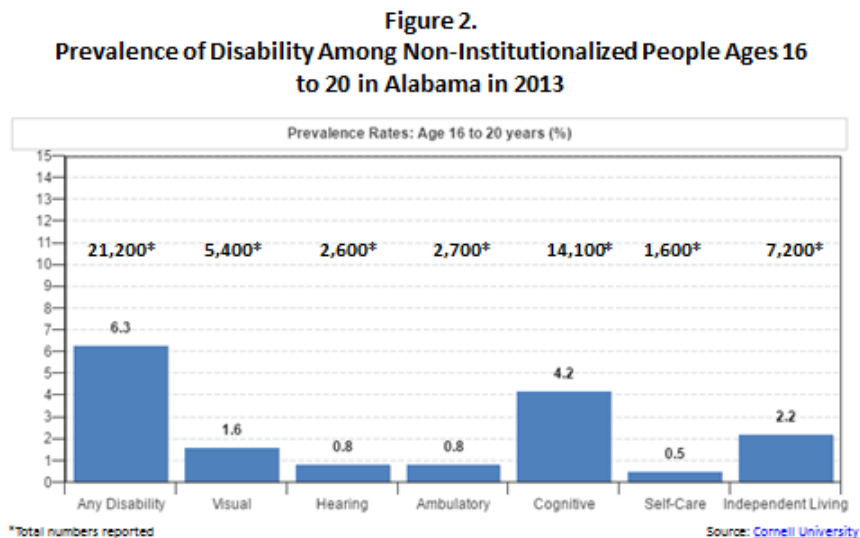
- ❖ 71.3% of persons without disabilities aged 18 to 64 are employed.³
- ❖ 27.2% of PwDs aged 18 to 64 are employed.³
- ❖ Alabama ranks 49th in the nation in terms of jobs for PWDs.
- ❖ **There is a 44.1 percentage point gap in the Labor Force Participation Rates (LFPR) between people with and without disabilities in AL.**
- ❖ 21,200 persons aged 16 to 20 have a disability.¹
- ❖ 409,700 persons aged 21 to 64 have a disability.¹
- ❖ 776,448 people with a disability live in the community.³
- ❖ The Employment Gap between PwDs and people without disabilities is 44.1.³
- ❖ 268,280 People ages 18-64 received SSDI or SSI benefits in the year 2012.³
- ❖ In 2012, AL's total expenditure on SSDI benefits for PwDs was \$3,522,588,000.³
- ❖ Voc. Rehab. obtained 4,588 jobs for PwDs in AL in 2013.²
- ❖ Voc. Rehab. received 10,234 general applicants in AL in 2013.³

1. 2013 Disability Status Report: Alabama, disabilitydata.org
2. StateData: The National Report on Employment Services and Outcomes, 2014
3. Annual Disability Statistics Compendium

While we are pleased to the information discussed above, further data points are needed to ensure that Alabama’s workforce system is fully equipped to empower more people with disabilities to find employment. From our review of your Combined State Plan, it is clear that your leaders understand the critical importance of tracking the Labor Force Participation Rate. This metric provides a clearer understanding of the health of your state economy than simply looking at the unemployment numbers which only track people we are actively seeking work. **From our perspective as an organization, tracking the LFPR most important data point for tracking employment outcomes between people with and without disabilities.** We hope that the LFPR drive the design of your state performance metrics.

Further, there is a critical need for better data points around youth with disabilities in your Combined State Plan. The most effective interventions are those which empower youth with disabilities to successfully transition from school to work rather than ever getting trapped in the benefits system. **As such, attached below are several charts that suggest what types of data are needed in the final version of your State Plan:**

- A. Better data on youth with disabilities who are aging in the workforce (ages 16-20).** If Alabama’s workforce system is to seriously deliver on the promise of improving school to work transitions for youth, it is critical to know how many youth with disabilities will be aging out of school.



B. What types of disabilities do youth have who are transitioning into the workforce?

This type of information is critical important because youth with vision, mobility and hearing disabilities need specific types of tools and training, but may otherwise be ready for high skill, high wage jobs. To support the success of youth with cognitive disabilities, it will be critical for Alabama to provide early work experiences and skill training.

Figure 3.
AL Ages 6 to 21 Served Under IDEA

	2012	2013
All Disabilities	72,361	73,565
Specific Learning Disability	32,112	31,647
Speech or Language Impairment	13,084	13,227
Intellectual Disability	5,942	6,104
Emotional Disturbance	1,322	1,322
Multiple Disability	1,272	1,284
Hearing Impairment	869	895
Orthopedic Impairment	582	566
Other Health Impairment	8,763	9,447
Visual Impairment	467	481
Autism	4,915	5,437
Deaf Blindness	9	10
Traumatic Brain Injury	220	231
Developmental Delay	2,804	2,914

Source: <http://disabilitycompendium.org/compendium-statistics/special-education>

All this data is already readily available, but is missing from most WIOA plans and strategies. Each state needs to have the right tools and training to fit their population and the labor demands of their employers. **As an example of the data that is needed, we have submitted with our comments, a copy of the presentation our organization has compiled about employment for people with disabilities in Alabama.**

We are making the above suggestions because we want to ensure that Alabama is using the best, most representative data available in measuring its performance. **As we stated in our introduction and in the comments above, we recommend that the Labor Force Participation Rates, especially the gap between people with and without disabilities in the workforce, be included as a performance metric in your state.** It is far more representative of the barriers people with disabilities are facing and is the best performance metric for monitoring their employment.

Currently, Alabama ranks 49th in the national as measured by the employment rate among Alabamians with disabilities. Cost-effective solutions exist and improved outcomes can be achieved through focused effort. **There will be a considerable return on investment if Alabama's workforce system expands successful school to work transition programs.** In particular models [like Project Search](#), [Bridges from School to Work](#), as well as [the cluster model of Kessler Foundation](#) could be part of your state sector strategies to meet growing labor market needs. Indeed, the most effective way of continuing to improve outcomes in competitive, integrated employment is by focusing on sectors that are experiencing rapid growth. **In Alabama, that means that youth with disabilities should be trained for jobs in Healthcare, Hospitality, Transportation/Logistics, and STEM.** We have more to say on this point in our comments below. We hope that this data will be used to implement the performance metrics needed to guide resource investment and workforce programs.

2. Busting Stigmas, Myths, and Misconceptions Should Be a Key Part of Workforce Strategy:

Low expectations and misconceptions are critical barriers to employment for people with disabilities. [A Princeton study shows that while people with disabilities are seen as warm, they are not seen as competent.](#) Similarly, [a study published by Cornell Hospitality Quarterly found that companies share a concern that people with disabilities cannot adequately do the work required of their employees.](#)

Alabama's state plan omits any mention of the negative stigmas and misconceptions that people with disabilities commonly face. These stigmas need to be addressed by the state so that all people are aware of the benefits of hiring people with disabilities. As such, we recommend that your plan be amended to include a comprehensive, proactive communications/public relations strategy for reducing such stigmas. The best way to fight stigmas is to let employers see the facts from other employers who are already succeeding by hiring people with disabilities. **In order to ensure that such efforts have the biggest possible impact, it needs to be supported by a serious, systematic and ongoing communications campaign that highlights the benefits of inclusive hiring.**

In terms of potential employer partners, we encourage your state plan to look at [Disability Equality Index that assesses the inclusion and hiring efforts of major employers.](#) It was put together by the United States Business Leadership Network (USBLN) which operates [a network of affiliates across the country, including in your state that can be an incredible resource for your work.](#) However, it should be a component of Alabama planning and implementation of a serious business-to-business PR effort. The companies which scored 100% in the USBLN index can be a great resource. These are Ameren Corporation, AT&T, Booz Allen Hamilton Inc., Capital One Financial Corporation, Comcast, NBC Universal, Ernst & Young LLP, Florida Blue, Freddie Mac, Highmark Health, JPMorgan Chase & Co., Lockheed Martin Corporation, Northrop Grumman Corporation, Pacific Gas and Electric Company, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (PwC), Procter & Gamble, Qualcomm Incorporated, Sprint Corporation, Starbucks Coffee Company, and TD Bank N.A.

Polls and focus groups show that there are three types of messages and audiences that are needed to expand employment for people with disabilities. Serious communications campaigns are needed for all three:

- A. CEOs/business leaders need to understand the value proposition/business case for their specific company as to why they should focus on putting people with disabilities into their talent pipelines.** This is best done through business-to-business success stories. People with disabilities can work successfully in hotels, healthcare, tend our parks and facilities, assist aging seniors, and they can be super talents in developing computer software and engineering solutions. CEOs and business leaders need to know that people with disabilities can be the BEST people to get a job done.
- B. Human resources professionals and on-the-ground supervisors need to understand that hiring people with disabilities is generally easy and inexpensive, and that any costs incurred are more than offset from increased loyalty.** Hiring managers and supervisors are key players who can turn high minded policy and business goals into action at the ground level. However, studies show that many are uninformed about people with disabilities. They are afraid of potential legal action, costs, or other failures. They need supports that will empower them to overcome their own fears and to excel at

recruiting, hiring, supervising, or working with teammates who have disabilities. VR staff and community agencies can fully support human resources professionals and managers in dealing with their own specific fears and stigmas surrounding hiring people with disabilities, and should do so, given that they are one of the few states who have opted to go for a dual-customer approach at their program centers. Moreover, online and in-person training is readily available to help from a variety of sources. RespectAbility has online webinars, as [does ASKJAN.org](#), USDOL and others. Partners like [the Poses Family Foundation Workplace Initiative](#) can provide training to the workforce staff and volunteers systems-wide as well as to community agencies in supporting companies through messaging efforts around related to fear and stigma. [The National Organization on Disability](#) and [the U.S. Business Leadership Network](#) offer strong resources as well.

- C. People with disabilities and their families need high expectations. From the time of diagnosis, education for high expectation must begin. Alabama needs a public relations campaign that will inspire Alabamians with disabilities to set their hopes high, as low expectations and low self-esteem are a barrier to employment.** For example, Virgin Airways founder Sir Richard Branson and finance wizard Charles Schwab are also dyslexic. Scientist Stephen Hawking and multi-billionaire businessman Sheldon Adelson, like Gov. Greg Abbott of Texas and President Franklin D. Roosevelt before them, are wheelchair/mobility device users. The CEO of Wynn Casinos, Steve Wynn, is legally blind. Arthur Young, co-founder of the giant EY (formerly Ernst & Young) was deaf. Success sells success and that is something the workforce system should seriously utilize in order to motivate and inspire in an intentional manner moving forward.

As an example of the power and value of making the business care for hiring people with disabilities, we offer Alabama the insights gained from our [#RespectTheAbility](#) campaign. The campaign focuses on how hiring people with disabilities can make organizations stronger and more successful. It highlights the benefits to employers that look beyond the disability and imagine the possibility when hiring talented employees with disabilities. Our profiles of diverse employers such as EY, AT&T, and Kwik Trip

3. Strong Sector Strategies- The need for strategic alignment of workforce development and economic development to expand employment for people with disabilities:

As required by WIOA Sec. 102(b)(1)(A), State Plans must include a detailed analysis of the economic sectors of the state economy that are growing and are forecasted to grow in the future. The success of WIOA depends on being an employer driven paradigm shift. Expanding opportunities for people with barriers to employment such as disability requires strong partnerships with employers in those sectors which are rapidly expanding.

The structure of Alabama's economic projected growth can be seen on Table 21 on page 39. We recommend that Alabama employers try to employ people with disabilities in many of these sectors and sub-sectors listed which will be explained below. Occupations such as Occupational therapy assistants, home health aides, and other health care and social assistance positions are expected to grow and add nearly 60,000 new jobs by 2022. Information technology, enabling technology, and other technology fields relating to things such as robotics and nanotechnology are projected to grow in the coming future. These and other STEM sectors are

fields where some people with disabilities can thrive. Additionally, your state should look at hiring more people with disabilities in the food service and accommodation sector, as it is one of the top five industries currently in Alabama.

People with disabilities represent an untapped labor resource that can meet the diverse talent needs of our nation's growing job sectors. The job gains in these sectors offer a great opportunity for focused sector strategies sustain and build on employment outcomes being achieved among people with disabilities.

a. Health Care and Social Assistance:

The rapid emerging talent needs in health care represent both a challenge and an opportunity for the nation's workforce system. It is challenge propelled by an aging population resulting in increasing demand for qualified workers ready to fill the talent needs of hospitals, assisted living centers, and nursing home. It is opportunity to channel the incredible talents of people with disabilities into the workforce. This is a topic that needs to be examined closely and has implications for people with disabilities who want to work.

The State Plan projects continued job growth in the fields of "Education and Health Care." **People with disabilities can and should be part of the solution to this critical demand in the labor market.** A 2014 report from the [Office of Disability Employment Policy](#) (ODEP) captured this opportunity clearly, saying that "[people with disabilities] not only represent an untapped talent pool, but also offer significant value and insight" in the field of healthcare. It is important for healthcare institutions to reflect their customers, and people with disabilities interface more with the healthcare system. There are [numerous examples of young people with disabilities doing incredible work in the fields of healthcare, elder care, and in assisted living](#). **Employers working in health and elder care can greatly benefit from the loyalty, dedication, and retention rates of employees with disabilities.**

These examples all reflect how the Project Search model is well suited to meeting the growing talent needs in health care across the many states. As such, we recommend that Project Search be significantly expanded as they have done in Wisconsin, Florida and other states. Nationally, each year approximately 2,700 such young people, spread out in 45 states, do a nine month, school-to-work program that takes place entirely at the workplace. This innovative, business-led model features total workplace immersion, which facilitates a seamless combination of classroom instruction, career exploration, and worksite-based training and support. Nationally, Project Search sites overall have been achieving outstanding results for people with disabilities, employers, and taxpayers alike. For example, [the first longitudinal study of the program found "a 68% success rate in transitioning students from high school into competitive employment" and "Project SEARCH sites in Upstate New York that have an impressive 83% success rate overall."](#) The goal for each program participant is competitive employment. We suggest that you look to follow the example set by the state of Wisconsin where they started with three Project Search sites and are expanding to 27. The experiences of the dedicated state officials, VR counselors, workforce professionals, and special educators who have increased Wisconsin's Project Search programs offer profound insights in the steps necessary to make rapid expansion a reality. Thinking long-term, investments in Project Search and other such programs will save big money for taxpayers while also strengthening the talent pool for employers.

b. Science, Tech, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and The Autism Advantage:

Exciting opportunities for improving employment outcomes for people with disabilities lay in the fields related to STEM jobs. **As has been documented in many cases, there can be an “Autism Advantage” in the STEM space. Indeed, some people on the Autism spectrum can have the very best skills in science, math and engineering.** [Microsoft, SAP, and Specialisterne](#) have committed themselves to “[provide employment opportunities for people on the autism spectrum in roles such as software testers, programmers, system administrators, and data quality assurance specialists.](#)” [The Israeli Defense Forces recruits and trains their citizens on the Autism spectrum for work in their elite intelligence unit.](#)

Delaware’s Governor Jack Markell is partnering with companies to employ more people on the Autism spectrum in STEM jobs. Such examples need to be implemented by other states. This issue of STEM and access for student with disabilities is a natural point of partnership between the workforce system and the educational system. That work needs to start young, be matched with high expectations for success, and designed to ensure people with disabilities have the chance to become future scientists, engineers, doctors and mathematicians.

Ensuring the Accessibility of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Programs and Careers for People with Disabilities, especially Students with IEPs, is vital. As Carol Glazer of the National Organization on Disabilities wrote in *Huffington Post*, “[America is already lagging when it comes to STEM-skilled workers. The U.S. will have more than 1.2 million job openings in STEM fields by 2018.](#)” Governors in other states have looked at STEM needs and begun to develop solutions. For example, [in New York State Governor Cuomo has ensured that magnet schools for STEM are located near IBM, a major STEM employer in their state.](#) Other states should be looking at ways to follow this model. Together, state workforce system and educational system can look to supported-employment programs such as Project Search, Specialisterne, and [the Marriot Foundation's Bridges to Work Program](#) as models for developing a systematic approach to providing the supports necessary for our students on the autism spectrum to excel in STEM.

c. High Turnover Jobs: Hospitality/Accommodations, Food Service, Retail Trade:

Millions of dollars are lost each year due to employee turnover. [For all jobs earning less than \\$50,000 per year, the average cost of replacing one employee is between \\$6,000 and \\$20,000.](#) Research shows that employees with disabilities, when their interests and abilities are aligned with the needs of employers, are more productive and loyal than their non-disabled peers. Company records show that even when the relatively more expensive accommodations were factored in, the overall costs of disability accommodations were far outweighed by the low turnover rates and better tenures of the employees with disabilities.

A great example of an employment sector where employees with disabilities can be tremendously successful is the hospitality industry. Accommodations and food service are extremely high turnover jobs and numerous studies show that people with disabilities can be outstanding in those fields and have significantly higher employer loyalty.

An outstanding example of the type of work needed is found in Missouri. As part of the Poses Family Foundation’s Workplace Initiative, a coalition of employment service providers has launched a successful training and placement program with the hospitality sector in St. Louis. This training runs for up to 12 weeks, and takes place on site at the hotel; all participants are paid by the hotel for the duration of training. Since the summer of 2015, two cohorts of

trainees have completed training at the Hyatt Regency. Trainees have gone on to permanent employment at the Hyatt and other hotel partners in a range of departments—culinary; auditing; and customer service. This type of training and Poses’ Workplace Initiative could easily be part of your overall Sector Strategies. In other states, [hotels and other hospitality employers have found Project SEARCH to be an amazing source of talent](#). [The work done by Embassy Suites and David Scott](#) in Omaha, Nebraska offers [valuable lessons you can look to in order to improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities](#). State Boards, along with other components of the workforce system, should connect with employers in the hospitality sector to begin figuring out how to benefit from these models.

Another sector with high turnover and big potential is retail trade. Many companies, including [UPS](#), [Wal-Mart](#), and [OfficeMax have proven records of success](#). [Walgreens has demonstrated that workers with disabilities in their distribution centers are as productive, safer, and turn over less when compared to peers without disabilities](#). These efforts have taken the logistics sector by storm with [Lowe's](#), [OfficeMax](#), [Pepsi](#), as well as [P&G](#) are all launching their own successful disability hiring initiatives. For example, [as reported by the National Organization on Disability, “Lowe’s hired more than 150 new workers with disabilities in the first year, and an additional 250 workers in the following 18-month period.”](#) They can be outstanding partners for disability employment as these industries suffer from high turnover rates and people with disabilities are proven to have significantly higher retention rates. It is important to identify more specific opportunities with employers and to cite them inside the plan, as well as the criteria by which to continue and to expand such partnerships in the future.

d. Jobs with state government and state contracting can also be sources of opportunity:

While the focus of our comments on the State Plans are around aligning the workforce system to create opportunities for people with disabilities in the private sector, public sector employment should not be neglected. In the year ahead, the workforce of many state governments is likely to be impacted by the cresting wave of Baby Boomers retiring just as other sectors are being shaken.

As such, adopting affirmative actions to hire people with disabilities could be a solution to this coming challenge. Other states have adopted such steps as an opportunity measure in their state hiring policies. This was first discussed in Governor Markell’s *Better Bottom Line* Initiative and later in RespectAbility’s *Disability Employment First Planning* Toolkit. In Governor Markell’s own words, [“One key action is to set a state goal for hiring people with disabilities through an executive order and hold agencies accountable for achieving that goal.”](#)

This is an issue that Governors, both Republican and Democrat, have taken action to address. In many different states, Governors have worked hard to expand the recruitment and retention of people with disabilities for jobs in state government. For example, [Governor Asa Hutchinson](#) has recently committed his state government to hiring more people with disabilities for jobs in state government. “It is important,” he said, “that our state government set the example of this commitment.”

A further step that could be taken to expand such opportunities would be to look at state contracting as another potential avenue of opportunity. For example, we would encourage South Carolina to learn from the experiences of Nevada and Massachusetts. [The Bay State recently launched an interesting Supplier Diversity Program \(SDP\)](#). This is a rare example where

Massachusetts is actually leading the nation in terms of innovative efforts to expand opportunities for people with disabilities rather than simply relying on the perception of success.

Likewise, in Nevada, [“the Preferred Purchase Program”](#) allows “agencies to bypass the competitive bid process and purchase goods and services from registered community training centers which employ people with disabilities.” Both efforts could be replicated in New Jersey. **The untapped potential of people with disabilities is such that a full-spectrum, all-of-the-above-and-more approach is needed. While our priority is on seeing the talents of people with disabilities channeled into the private sector, employment opportunities in the public sectors should not be neglected.**

e. Agriculture:

Alabama still has growing industries in agriculture such as the production of cotton, peanuts, poultry, and forest products. [There is an opportunity to replicate the success of TIAA-CREF’s Fruits of Employment project that provides internships and job training to workers with disabilities to prep them for careers in competitive agriculture. Farmers in Georgia have already had success with a program designed to reduce barriers persons with disability face in agricultural fields and it can and should be incorporated into WIOA plans.](#)

4. Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act and Federal Contractors offer states the chance to innovate, collaborate, and expand opportunity:

Almost all of the state plans that we have reviewed have neglected to mention important rules surrounding the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Fortunately, there are two substantive references to Section 503 regulations in the current draft of Alabama’s Combined State Plan. First, on page 122, the State Plan reports that the Alabama Division of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS) “hosted a major conference for employers in conjunction with OFCCP staff to provide information to employers on the 503 Federal Hiring mandates.” We are glad to see your state has been proactive by holding events to educate employers about the opportunity created by the 7% utilization goal set for companies to recruit, hire, and retain qualified individuals with disabilities in all job categories. Page 123 specifically talks in greater detail around compliance efforts and Section 503. Specifically, in talking about the Alabama Industry Liaison Group (ALILG), the State Plan reports that ADRS has been the “lead provider of information, training and resources”, has done outreach to “ALILG businesses”, trained “ADRS business relations consultants”, and has participated in “local, regional and state conferences.”

We are glad to see these efforts included in your Combined State Plan and we hope they will be a foundation you can build on in the near future. These regulations and requirements entail far more than just new rules for businesses to play by. Section 503 is an opportunity that could potentially have a broad impact on the employer engagement work of the entire workforce system. The companies who must comply with Section 503 have an opportunity to teach companies not impacted by the regulations how to effectively employ, engage, and retain workers or customers with disabilities. As such, specific companies that should be included in your outreach efforts including: The Boeing Company, Computershare Limited, L-3 Communications Holdings Inc., and Northrop Grumman Corporation. More detailed information regarding federal contracts in [Alabama can be found here](#).

5. Ensure that the Assurances in Your WIOA Checklist are matched up to a strategy to fully implement them and be successful:

The Common Assurances required of the entire workforce system and the program specific Assurances outlined in the State Plan are critical factors in the overall implementation and ultimate success of WIOA. As such, it is critical that each assurance is matched up with a strategy fitted to meeting and, if possible, exceeding the requirements of the law.

As a good example of the level of detail needed here, consider WIOA Section 188. The anti-discriminatory rules originally outlined under WIA need to be updated to reflect the steps needed towards making universal access a reality. For example, in seeking to meeting Common Assurance #7 listed in the state plan on page 72, we are directing states to consider the resources made available from the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP.) [They have recently released a guide that digs deep into what universal accessibility will mean for the workforce system.](#) Further, Common Assurance #10 affirms each state plan's commitment to meeting the requirement that "one-stop certification policy that ensures the physical and programmatic accessibility of all one-stop centers with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990." However, merely meeting legal requirements should not be the end of this process. Indeed, looking at physical and programmatic accessibility can be an opportunity to invest in a more proactive workforce system very actively committed to collaboration and partnerships.

However, if there is no plan that specifically identifies how the state is going to get to the commitment made in the assurance; the state is facing a serious problem.

6. Avoid the Opportunity Costs of Focusing Too Much on One-Stop Centers. Programmatic and Database Accessibility and Privacy is Critically Important:

Public policy is about the allocation of scarce resources to meet infinite needs. It is vital to invest resources on those points where they can have the greatest effect. **One challenge that we have seen in many states WIOA plan has been the prioritization of expensive bricks and mortar One-Stops as the primary access point for programs and services under WIOA.** Focusing exhaustively on One-Stop Centers, physical infrastructure, and co-locating services comes at the opportunity cost of losing the chance to improve supports and increase outcomes. We have not seen much evidence of this in Alabama's state plan, so we recommend focusing on virtual accessibility instead.

The workforce needs of state economies are evolving rapidly thanks to technology and globalization. We are pleased to see that Alabama has recognized this and is creating strategies, such as #3 listed on page 51 to resolve this issue. The creation of a "one stop shop online workforce information resource" is an integral part of moving your state's workforce services forward technologically and improving their accessibility. **However, Alabama should look to expand upon this strategy and set their sights higher. You state should look to do online training and provide other services digitally, not just information.** Investing excessive resources on physical locations at the expense of improving online delivery of workforce services and supports is an example of looking backwards, not forwards. Moreover, [the District of Columbia and others have successfully moved much of their one-stop services to trained staff with laptops that go to schools, hospitals, and community organizations where they are better able to serve the public.](#)

At the same time considerable thought needs to take place around the creation of a unified intake system for the workforce system and government benefits programs. Those shared databases must be fully accessible to people with disabilities who use screen readers or who need captions to understand videos that explain how to use the system. Thought also needs to go into

privacy issues as private disability issues should not be shared where it is not needed and appropriate.

7. Working very closely with an existing USBLN chapter is a great tool for effectively engaging employers and reaching the right business audience:

As we stated previously about communicating the business case for hiring people with disabilities, effective employer engagement is a necessary component of achieving improved employment outcomes. One of the most effective means of carrying that message forward is to have a network of engaged businesses whose bottom line has benefitted from the talents of employees with disabilities. Business to business communication can help tear down the misconceptions and stigmas which are barriers to employment. It is evident that Alabama has already begun collaborating with business leaders, as evidenced by statements such as those on page 55 which reference workforce boards communicating with business leaders to ensure that employment needs are being properly identified and met.

Currently, Alabama has one United States Business Leadership Network (USBLN) affiliate chapter, the Alabama Business Leadership Employment (ABLE) Network. The relationship between ABLE and the ADRS was briefly mentioned on pages 123 and 135 and should be further expanded. These affiliate chapters are oftentimes not at the WIOA table. As such, we are encouraging Alabama to look at the successes achieved in Wyoming, which possesses one of the most effective, engaged, and active affiliate chapters in the country. The Wyoming BLN, despite the challenges of a largely rural population and limited resources, has been achieving outstanding employment outcomes. We would be happy to provide Alabama's WIOA team with an introduction to Lynn Kirkbride the USBLN's Director of Affiliate Relations. She is an incredible asset and has extensive experience around overcoming barriers to employment. Her email is lynn@usbln.org and she can be reached by phone at (307) 631-0894. Her efforts, and those of the Wyoming BLN, offer profound insights into how to effectively engage employers around the business case for hiring people with disabilities.

8. Ensure that Apprenticeship Programs are Fully Accessible and Actively Recruiting Young People with Disabilities, Especially with Government Contractors:

As your state looks to improve these programs, we highly recommend that the workforce system seriously look at ways to make apprenticeships accessible to people with disabilities. It is lightly mentioned on page 178 of the state plan that Alabama will “work with career and technical education to develop innovative programs that address internship and apprenticeship opportunities”, however, your state should be keen in developing a more structured approach to this aspect of pre-employment training. At the federal level, the Office of Disability Employment Policy has worked hard to generate resources which can open up these exciting programs to “youth and young adults with a full range of disabilities.” The regulations related to apprenticeship which have recently come out of the Department of Labor provide states the flexibility they need to refine and design training programs that are maximally inclusive of people with diverse talents. [We encourage you to invest time and energy to understand the best practices contained in ODEP's apprenticeship toolkit. Further, we would also highly recommend that VR staff connect and collaborate with the Federal officer responsible for apprenticeship programs in your state or region.](#) Such innovative partnerships and improved accessibility are essential elements of realization the full promise of WIOA for people with disabilities.

Further, we would suggest that there is a critical opportunity to look at Section 503 and federal contractors as a partner in expanding apprenticeship programs. Funding to cover training costs could be a very attractive selling point for federal contractors looking to meet their 503 requirement. Further, we would also recommend looking at the intersection of apprenticeships and sector strategies. Not only can apprenticeships be set up in traditional and most populous fields in Alabama such as manufacturing, but they can also be incredibly useful in health care and computer jobs which are also projected to grow. Look at the successes achieved by Project SEARCH at a wide range of employers. As such, we recommend that the workforce system and the State Board investigate how to both open apprenticeship programs to people with disabilities and to create apprenticeship opportunities in new career fields as well.

9. Overcome the gap between disability services and career services in Post-Secondary Education:

There is a fundamental disconnect in most post-secondary education programs between disability services and careers. This is not a new issue and it is one that other organizations have raised in the past. However, with the priorities put into place by the implementation of WIOA, there is a historic opportunity to bridge this gap and to improve career and technical education for young people with and without differences. As formulated by the National Organization on Disability, at most educational institutions, “the career services office, which assists students in preparing for” the workforce [“lack a strong—or any—connection to the office of disabled student services, which ensures proper accessibility and accommodations on campus for students with disabilities.”](#)

The result is a price we pay as a society is twofold. First, it costs employers who are unable to find qualified job candidates. Second, it costs students with disabilities who may be able to graduate with a degree thanks to accommodations but will go on to struggle to succeed in the working world. Nationally, there are 1.3 million young Americans ages 16-20 with disabilities. [They have high expectations to go into the workforce but currently only 53% of college graduates with disabilities are employed](#) as opposed to 84% of graduates with no disability. In total, only about 7% of people with disabilities will earn a college degree and less than half of the 2.3 million with a degree are employed.

[Due to the mandate created by Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act, federal contractors now have a utilization goal to make sure that 7% of their employees across all job groups be qualified people with disabilities.](#) This regulation is actually a huge opportunity because companies are actively looking to hire recent graduates with disabilities. The first place for new recruits is college and campus recruiting. Your state has the chance to demonstrate to business that college students with disabilities are on campuses and that they should be actively targeting those with disabilities just as they do all other diversity recruiting on college campuses.

While the statistics cited above are national ones, they have bearing on the work that needs to be done through your community college system. Beyond just WIOA, community colleges are uniquely positioned to innovate in order to expand opportunity. Community colleges are very closely connected to the working world and the specific training requirements of employers.

10. Supporting Pre-Employment Transition Services through the Development of Public-Private Partnerships:

We are pleased to see that Alabama has been expanding partnerships and program to increase and improve employment services for people with disabilities. The Summer Work Program, Smart Work Ethics Training, Jointly-Funded Job Coach, and Alabama State Interagency Transition Team listed on page 125 are all steps in the right direction which increase collaboration with other organizations and actors. Your state can and should do more. We are encouraging states to follow the example set by Florida and Wisconsin by working hard to expand the number of Project SEARCH sites. However, this is not the only paradigm that you should follow. The school system, vocational rehabilitation, and local workforce boards can build creative, collaborative partnerships with companies that are leading in the disability space.

States would benefit greatly by looking at other models of innovation that are showing great potential to fundamentally improve employment outcomes. To begin with, we would highly recommend that state workforce systems examine how to support disability employment efforts through establishment of public/private partnerships in local communities. The ADRS should have no issue with this, as according to the plan on page 177, they are already partnered with 28 other organizations. These types of partnerships, and others could focus on the “cluster” model, started by Poses Family Foundation that is having tremendous success in diverse states as Nevada, Georgia, and Ohio. [This model depends on “consortium of employers committed to implement or expand programs”, “a public/private partnership to coordinate services for job-seekers with disabilities, with a single point of contact for employers”, and “Connections among employers, public and private agencies, and schools to reach young adults with disabilities who are in transition from school to work.”](#)

11. Getting Out the Word on Free and Accessible Services and Resources:

There are many online and in person resources to help employers and people with disabilities come together to build success. According to the state plan, the “limited awareness of the State and Local Workforce System as a brand by job seekers” is one of the weaknesses of the program, so we are pleased to see that Alabama has responded to this by trying to increase awareness. However, all the stakeholders need to be educated to know that these resources exist, and that they are free and user-friendly. These resources must also all be accessible. We know that broadband access is a huge issue in rural states, Alabama included. However, it’s important to ensure that online resources enhance the effort of your workforce system.

Alabama needs to make an effort to demonstrate to employers and prospective employees that these services exist. Doing so by coordinating it with the possible public relations campaign is one way to go about this. Also, your state should be careful not to waste money trying to re-invent the wheel in creating online resources as [ASKJAN.org](#), [the US Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment](#) Policy, [our organization and others also offer free toolkits, webinars and training opportunities](#). Another resource is [Understood.org](#). This is a comprehensive resource to help families and individuals with learning and attention issues build their educational and career plans. It will be helpful to collaborate with those groups however to ensure that the best tools are created to fit the training and information needs on these issues.

12. “Nothing About Us Without Us”:

“Nothing About Us without Us” has long been a rallying cry for the one-in-five Americans who have a disability and it has implications for the workforce system. Section 107 of WIOA dictates the establishment, criteria, and membership for the Local Workforce Development Boards that are crucial implementers of each state’s overall workforce strategy. **As such, we feel there is a critical need to ensure that people with disabilities are represented on such local boards and make their voices heard.** Section 107(b)(2)(A)(iii) of WIOA specifically states that “community-based organizations that have demonstrated experience and expertise in addressing the employment needs of individuals with barriers to employment” may be represented on the boards and this includes “organizations....that provide or support competitive integrated employment for individuals with disabilities.” We are very pleased to see that the ADRS Commissioner currently has seat on the state Workforce Development Board. Having someone so involved with the disability community on a workforce board can provide valuable insight and progressive ideas, so for that we commend Alabama.

Even a non-voting, ex-officio member of a WIB can bring critical perspectives that improve the WIB’s efforts overall. As such, we recommend that states look for ways to recruit local community organizations or self-advocates for inclusion on their local boards. Perhaps this could be a natural point of partnership for Independent Living Centers across the country that do crucial work supporting employment and independence for people with a wide range of disabilities.

13. Transportation is a vital component and it must be addressed directly:

One significant reservation that we have regarding many of the state plans that we have reviewed has been the limited attention given to the issue of transportation. This is of critical importance not only for people with disabilities but also other members of low-income communities. Many people with disabilities do not drive. Others cannot afford private transportation. It is vital to work with public transportation to ensure that there are bus routes to places where there are internships, apprenticeships and other work opportunities for people with disabilities.

People with disabilities need transportation solutions. The Adaptive Driving Program listed on page 158, which trains people with disabilities how to drive vehicles with adaptive technology is a good practice in place. The federal transit law on page 212 and its strategies for each region are also good transportation solutions. However, there is always room for improvement. According to the plan, both rural and urban Alabamians need better transportation solutions. Public transportation need not be the only solution. In places where it is not possible to coordinate a bus route, states could look at partnering with Uber, Lyft, or other new transportation solutions. For people with disabilities who do drive, such companies as Uber and Lyft can also provide a way to enter into the workforce with flexible hours, so a state could also look at developing partnerships with these sorts of companies.

Public sector employers and federal contractors who have Section 503 obligations are key places for apprenticeships and internships and onboarding of talent. It is important for them to play a key role in planning for public transportation as well.

14. Aging workers and those with recently acquired disabilities must be specifically addressed:

It is absolutely necessary that Alabama address their aging population, and those who will acquire disabilities in the process. According to the plan on page 206, Alabama's "aging rate will outpace developments in most other states and the nation as a whole. The pool of persons ages 55 and older is projected to grow by 30% over the next 10 years, compared to only 4% for the 16-54 age group." **Alabama should look to move older workers who have acquired a disability into the top ten industries listed for them on page 205, such as food preparation and food service. Attention should start BEFORE aging workers and those with recently acquired disabilities lose their job due to aging and/or a newly acquired disability. Many people who have been in the workforce for decades find that before full retirement age they cannot keep up with the physical demands of their jobs. It is vital to start working with them BEFORE they lose their jobs. We also recommend Alabama to look at what Iowa has done with their aging population with acquired disabilities.** In Iowa, IVRS works with a major employer, Unity Point Hospital to "re-home" employees to other jobs within the same company when good workers can no longer do physical jobs and need a new assignment. They find that Emergency Room nurses, for example, come to a point where they can no longer keep up with the physical demands of that job. They have a department that works to "re-home" talented and valued employees who either age into a disability or acquire a disability through accident or illness. Empowering youth with disabilities to enter the workforce should be your highest priority, but keeping aging workers in the workforce until retirement age is also important. This will take a specific strategy and effort so that you don't have massive numbers of people going onto disability rolls and out of the workplace prematurely.

15. Engagement to Build a Mentor System for Customers of the Workforce System:

We are pleased to see that ADRS is intent on providing youth with disabilities with services such as internships and peer mentoring, as listed on pages 124. The Alabama Department of Mental Health in the Employment First Leadership Mentoring Program Community of Practice is a good example of this. **However, government can't and shouldn't do everything. There is a massive role that can be played by volunteers who are willing to help people with barriers to work, including people with disabilities, find and keep jobs. There is a critical, cooperative role for non-profits and faith-based organizations to play.** Local workforce development areas, for example, could be encouraged to recruit volunteers from local faith communities or local non-profits. However, much more can and should be done to work with parents of teens and young adults with disabilities, and to create volunteer mentorships for people with disabilities who are looking for work or need supports to stay employed and/or grow their careers.

Faith-based organizations and many others can fill massive gaps. [There is a terrific booklet, Clearing Obstacles to Work, put out by the Philanthropy Roundtable that is rich with potential partners and proven programs.](#) This is a huge missed opportunity as you will see in the booklet we just mentioned above. It's all about teaching people to fish (helping them get and keep a job) rather than just giving them fish. It is also important to note in terms of the SNAP and TANF programs that too many faith-based programs focus on giving out food without giving out the volunteer support to help people sustain themselves through gainful employment. [In looking to rethinking policies around SNAP funding, we suggest looking at the innovative efforts](#)

[of the Seattle Jobs Initiative \(SJI\) to realign that funding into more productive, employment outcomes.](#)

16. The disability issues of people involved in the corrections system must be addressed:

The work being done with this population needs to be viewed through the lens of disability. While there is work being done regarding the education of those in correctional facilities in preparing them to reenter society, such as the details listed on page 91, there is no mention of persons in correctional facilities with disabilities. [According to recently published data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, “An estimated 32% of prisoners and 40% of jail inmates reported having at least one disability.” This issue is a serious one and it needs to be addressed at the state level.](#) Frequently people are involved in the criminal justice system because they have disability issues, including learning differences, ADHD, executive function, and mental health issues that went undiagnosed and/or unaddressed through childhood and into the school years.

Given these statistics from the BJS, it is vital that states, including Alabama, identify how many of the individuals in the corrections system and in the ex-offender pipeline have disabilities. Serving people in the corrections system and ex-offenders is a critical workforce development challenge and one that can only increase when disability is a factor and it is not addressed appropriately. The price paid for ignoring this issue are higher rates of recidivism and greater costs to society. **Assessment tools are needed to identify disability issues as people enter the prison system and supports are needed as they exit the system back into society. Doing so would create opportunities for states to address those issues productively and proactively.**

Conclusion:

The bottom line is that expanding job opportunities for people with disabilities is beneficial to all. It is good for employers because the loyalty, talent, and skills of workers with disabilities contribute to the employers’ bottom line. It is good for the workforce system because improving services and supports for people with disabilities will benefit others with different barriers to employment. It is good for people with disabilities who want the dignity, pride, friendships, independence and income that work provides. And it is good for taxpayers, because it reduces the amount of funding spent on SSDI and other disability programs in the long run.

In all of our work around WIOA, we have emphasized the fact that this new law represents the intersection of hope and history for people with disabilities. Alabama’s WIOA State Plan demonstrates some of the hard work, dedicated effort, and specific policies needed to realize those hopes. People with disabilities want to pursue the American Dream, just like everyone else. Making sure there are pathways for their talents to meet employer talent needs is a win-win-win for people with disabilities, taxpayers, and businesses alike. We are happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Below are two data tables that provide detailed information ranking the states in terms of employment rates for people with disabilities as well as the employment gap between people with and without disabilities. This has been added to show you where each state ranks nationally.

APPENDIX – Ranking 50 States by Employment Rates and Employment Gap

Data Source- Chart 1: Table 2.1: Employment—Civilians with Disabilities Ages 18 to 64 Years Living in the Community for the United States and States: 2014 from the Annual Disability Statistics Compendium

Disability Employment Rate by State, 2014														
	State	%		State	%		State	%		State	%		State	%
1	South Dakota	50.1	12	Montana	40.5	23	Oklahoma	36.4	34	California	33.3	45	Arkansas	29.2
2	North Dakota	49.9	13	Connecticut	40.2	24	Oregon	36.4	35	Arizona	32.8	46	South Carolina	29.0
3	Iowa	46.5	14	New Hampshire	40.0	25	Indiana	36.2	36	Missouri	32.8	47	Mississippi	27.4
4	Nebraska	46.0	15	Kansas	39.8	26	Vermont	36.2	37	Maine	32.5	48	Kentucky	27.3
5	Wyoming	45.2	16	Wisconsin	39.8	27	Illinois	35.7	38	Louisiana	32.1	49	Alabama	27.2
6	Minnesota	44.4	17	New Jersey	39.2	28	Delaware	35.6	39	North Carolina	31.3	50	West Virginia	25.6
7	Utah	44.0	18	Maryland	39.1	29	Massachusetts	35.5	40	New Mexico	30.4		Washington D.C.	30.3
8	Hawaii	42.4	19	Idaho	38.8	30	Ohio	34.6	41	Florida	30.1			
9	Colorado	41.6	20	Texas	38.0	31	Pennsylvania	34.5	42	Tennessee	29.9		Source: Annual Disability Statistics Compendium	
10	Nevada	40.9	21	Washington	37.7	32	Rhode Island	33.9	43	Georgia	29.6			
11	Alaska	40.8	22	Virginia	37.6	33	New York	33.6	44	Michigan	29.6		United States	34.4

Source: [Annual Disability Statistics Compendium](#)

Data Source-Chart 2: Table 2.9: Employment Gap—Civilians Ages 18 to 64 Years Living in the Community for the United States and States, by Disability Status: 2014 Disability Statistics Compendium

The Difference in the Employment Gap Between Disabled and Non Disabled Adults 2014

	State	Gap		State	Gap		State	Gap		State	Gap		State	Gap
50	Maine	47.4	39	Mass.	43.5	28	Delaware	40.7	17	Minnesota	38.5	6	Alaska	35.3
49	Kentucky	47.1	38	Georgia	43.5	27	New York	40.4	16	Washington	38.3	5	Hawaii	34.2
48	South Carolina	45	37	Florida	43.3	26	Louisiana	40.3	15	Nebraska	37.9	4	South Dakota	33.6
47	Michigan	45	36	Mississippi	43.1	25	Virginia	40	14	Connecticut	37.7	3	Utah	33.5
46	West Virginia	44.9	35	N. Carolina	43	24	Illinois	40	13	Colorado	37.4	2	Nevada	33.4
45	Arkansas	44.6	34	Ohio	42.5	23	Kansas	39.9	12	Texas	37.3	1	North Dakota	32.1
44	Tennessee	44.5	33	Pennsylvania	42	22	Arizona	39.7	11	New Jersey	37.3		Washington DC	45.2
43	Missouri	44.4	32	Wisconsin	41.4	21	Oklahoma	39.2	10	Montana	37.3			
42	Vermont	44.2	31	New Hampshire	41.3	20	Maryland	39.1	9	Idaho	37		Source: Annual Disability Statistics Compendium	
41	Alabama	44.1	30	New Mexico	40.8	19	California	38.9	8	Wyoming	35.9			
40	Rhode Island	43.8	29	Indiana	40.7	18	Oregon	38.5	7	Iowa	35.7		USA	40.3

Source: [Annual Disability Statistics Compendium](#)



RESPECTABILITY

Alabama and Jobs for PwDs

Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi, President

www.RespectAbilityUSA.org

Alabama



Gov. Robert Bentley (R)

- ❖ 71.3% of persons without disabilities aged 18 to 64 are employed.³
- ❖ 27.2% of PwDs aged 18 to 64 are employed.³
- ❖ **Alabama ranks 49th in the nation in terms of jobs for PWDs.**
- ❖ **There is a 44.1 percentage point gap in the Labor Force Participation Rates (LFPR) between people with and without disabilities in AL.**
- ❖ 21,200 persons aged 16 to 20 have a disability.¹
- ❖ 409,700 persons aged 21 to 64 have a disability.¹
- ❖ 776,448 people with a disability live in the community.³
- ❖ The Employment Gap between PwDs and people without disabilities is 44.1.³
- ❖ 268,280 People ages 18-64 received SSDI or SSI benefits in the year 2012.³
- ❖ In 2012, AL's total expenditure on SSDI benefits for PwDs was \$3,522,588,000.³
- ❖ Voc. Rehab. obtained 4,588 jobs for PwDs in AL in 2013.²
- ❖ Voc. Rehab. received 10,234 general applicants in AL in 2013.³

1. 2013 Disability Status Report: Alabama, disabilitystatistics.org
2. StateData: The National Report on Employment Services and Outcomes, 2014
3. [Annual Disability Statistics Compendium](#)

Alabama

		People with Disabilities (%)		People without Disabilities (%)	
		2013	2014	2013	2014
Poverty ¹	US	28.7	28.2	13.6	13.0
Ages 18-64	AL	29	31.2	15.6	15.9
Smoking ¹	US	25.4	24.5	16.2	15.3
Ages 18 - over	AL	27.1	26.8	19.2	18.6
Obesity ¹	US	40.1	41.1	25.0	25.2
Ages 18 - over	AL	40.4	41.8	29.5	29.6
Employment ¹	US	33.9	34.4	74.2	75.4
Ages 18 - 64	AL	27.1	27.2	70.5	71.3

1. [Annual Disability Statistics Compendium.](#)

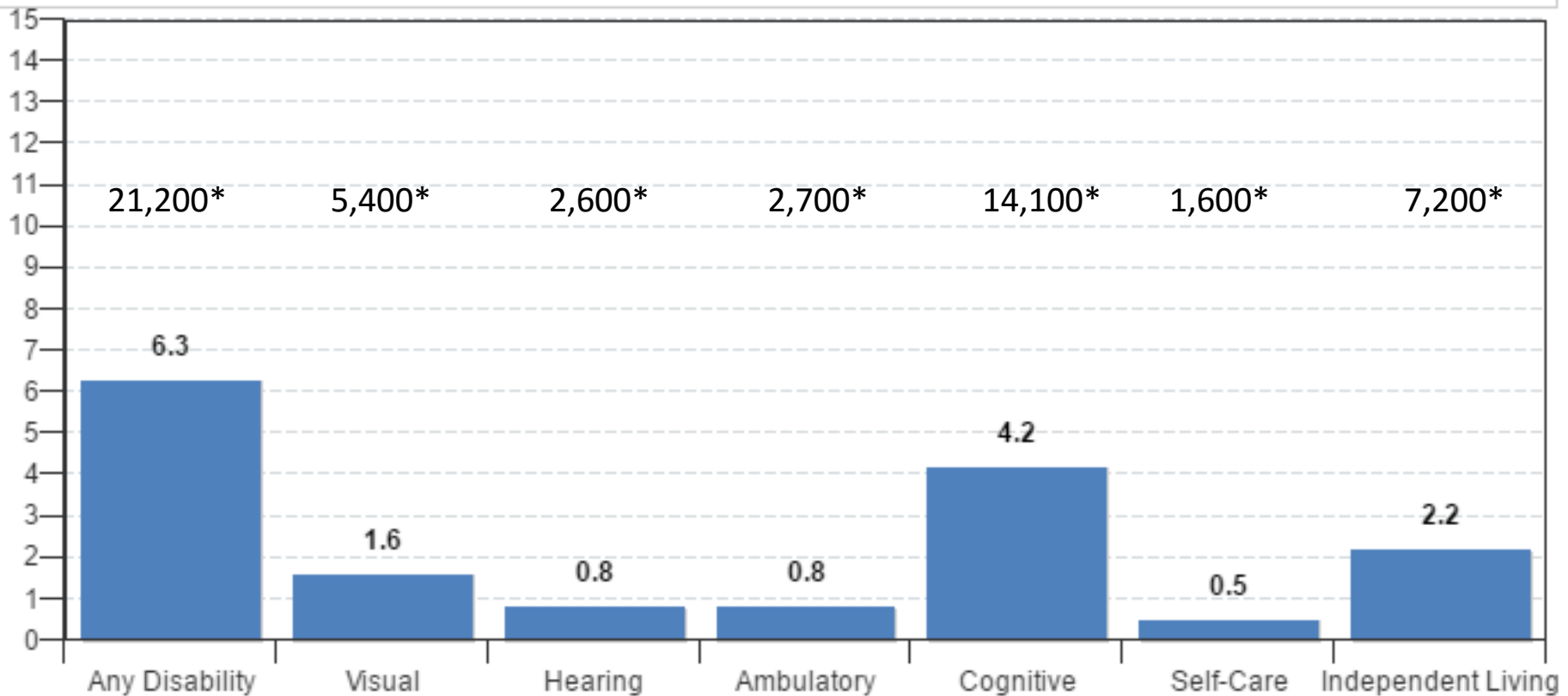
AL Ages 6 to 21 Served Under IDEA

	2012	2013
All Disabilities	72,361	73,565
Specific Learning Disability	32,112	31,647
Speech or Language Impairment	13,084	13,227
Intellectual Disability	5,942	6,104
Emotional Disturbance	1,322	1,322
Multiple Disability	1,272	1,284
Hearing Impairment	869	895
Orthopedic Impairment	582	566
Other Health Impairment	8,763	9,447
Visual Impairment	467	481
Autism	4,915	5,437
Deaf Blindness	9	10
Traumatic Brain Injury	220	231
Developmental Delay	2,804	2,914

Source: <http://disabilitycompendium.org/compendium-statistics/special-education>

Prevalence of Disability Among Non-Institutionalized People Ages 16 to 20 in Alabama in 2013

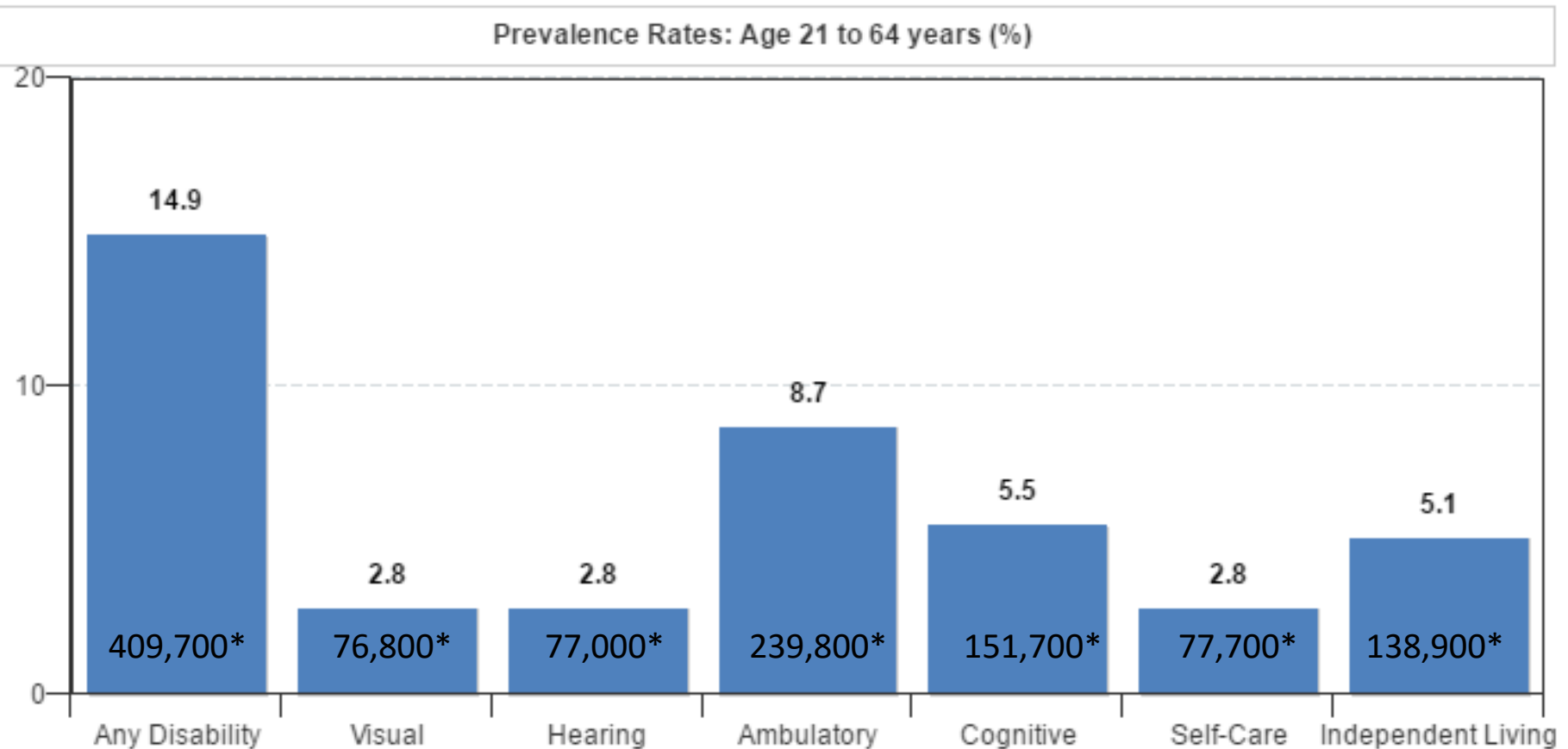
Prevalence Rates: Age 16 to 20 years (%)



*Total numbers reported

Source: [Cornell University](#)

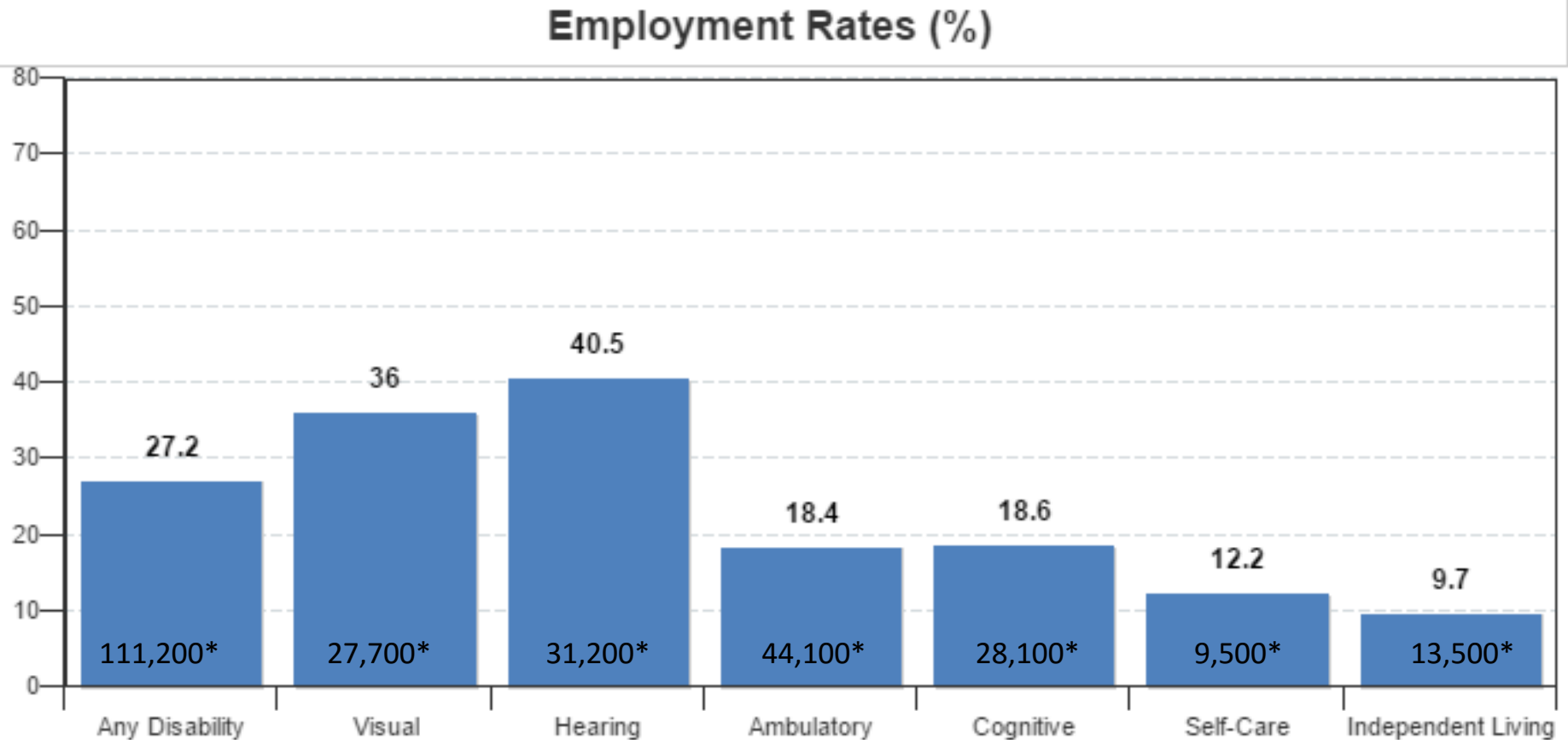
Prevalence of Disability Among Non-Institutionalized People Ages 21 to 64 in Alabama in 2012



*Total numbers reported

Source: [Cornell University](#)

Employment of Non-Institutionalized Working-Age People (Ages 21 to 64) by Disability Status in Alabama in 2012



*Total numbers reported

Source: [Cornell University](#)

Alabama Project SEARCH Sites

- ❖ Baptist Medical Center South, Montgomery
- ❖ Gadsden Regional Medical Center, Gadsden
- ❖ Huntsville Hospital, Huntsville
- ❖ Marshall Medical Centers, Guntersville
- ❖ Mobile Infirmary Hospital, Mobile
- ❖ Providence Hospital, Mobile
- ❖ Shelby Baptist Medical Center, Alabaster
- ❖ Thomas Hospital, Fairhope
- ❖ Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center, Tuscaloosa
- ❖ UAB Medicine, Birmingham

Project SEARCH: www.projectsearch.us

Contact Erin Riehle at Erin.Riehle@cchmc.org

Which Employers in Your State Must Meet 503 Rules (Hire PwDs)?

❖ Top contractors:

- The Boeing Company
- Computershare Limited
- L-3 Communications Holdings Inc.
- Northrop Grumman Corporation

See the entire list at the [Fedspending website](http://www.fedspending.org/fpds/fpds.php?stateCode=AL&sortp=u&detail=0&datatype=T&reptype=p&database=fpds&fiscal_year=&submit=GO)

http://www.fedspending.org/fpds/fpds.php?stateCode=AL&sortp=u&detail=0&datatype=T&reptype=p&database=fpds&fiscal_year=&submit=GO

How to get started: Job Accommodation Network → <https://askjan.org/>

US Business Leadership Network → <http://usbln.org/>

Jobs in Alabama

❖ Top five employers in Alabama:

- Manufacturing, health care services, retail trade, educational services and accommodation and food services

❖ [Click for Your Workforce Development Board](http://workforceinvestmentworks.com/workforce_board_info.asp?st=AL)

http://workforceinvestmentworks.com/workforce_board_info.asp?st=AL

❖ [Click for your Workforce Strategic Plan](http://www.adeca.alabama.gov/.../2012-2016%20WIA%20and%20W)

<http://www.adeca.alabama.gov/.../2012-2016%20WIA%20and%20W>

Resources

- ❖ StateData: The National Report on Employment Services and Outcomes, 2014 (data from 2013)
- ❖ 2013 Disability Status Report United States, Cornell University, 2013: www.disabilitystatistics.org
- ❖ Fedspending: www.fedspending.org
- ❖ Project SEARCH: www.projectsearch.us
- ❖ Job Accommodation Network: <https://askjan.org/>
- ❖ State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency:
http://wdcrobcolp01.ed.gov/Programs/EROD/org_list.cfm?category_cd=SVR
- ❖ RespectAbilityUSA: www.respectabilityusa.org

Let Us Know If We Can Help!

We have many resources for policy makers and employers on our website and are ready to help!

**RespectAbilityUSA
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