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Mar. 28, 2016 – RespectAbility and N.J. State Association of Jewish Federations Public Comments – New Jersey Combined State Plan

“Everyone should have the opportunity to be productive, earn a living, and feel a sense of personal fulfillment from employment. ...That’s why we’re working cooperatively with the private sector to ensure that people with disabilities are a seamless part of New Jersey’s workforce, with the independence and sense of community that comes from relationships developed inside and outside of the workplace.” – [Gov. Chris Christie, Employment First Executive Order, April 19, 2012.](#)

RespectAbility is pleased to submit the following comments regarding the current draft of New Jersey’s Combined State Plan as required under Section 102 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Because of WIOA, New Jersey has the opportunity to continue expanding competitive, integrated employment outcomes for people with disabilities. **There are 434,368 working age people with disabilities in New Jersey and only 39.2 percent of them are employed.** Further, there remains a 37.3 percentage point gap in the Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR) between people with and without disabilities. **There are over 26,000 youth with disabilities in New Jersey and each year a quarter of them will age out of school and into an uncertain future.**

WIOA gives New Jersey has the chance to invest resources in successful models and implement best practices to expand job opportunities for people with disabilities. Your state has worked to learn from best practices around the country. Still, like others, it has much to learn from other states that have worked hard to achieve improved employment outcomes. Other states have close to 50% employment rates for their citizens with disabilities. [States like the Dakotas, Alaska, and Wyoming have achieved increased results by putting best practices into places.](#) We know that New Jersey is focused on improving results and can do the same. The experience of these states shows ways that New Jersey can improve outcomes.

To help 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 New Jersey.](#)** That information is attached to our comments.

Having reviewed your Combined State Plan, we feel there is a mixture of positive and negative elements. For example, your State Plan says many of the things about Section 503 that we have recommended in our comments to other states. Further, there are many general points regarding Employment First throughout the Combined State Plan however there are no specific timetables or performance metrics. Lastly, there are very limited data on youth with disabilities and little information on the composition of the disability community in New Jersey. Your Plan discusses many priorities; however, we are concerned about a lack of specific detail.

Our public comments on New Jersey’s Combined 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 New Jerseyans with disabilities.

1. Make sure that the best data points, especially those around youth with disabilities as well as Labor Force Participation Rates (LFPRs) from your Workforce Analysis drive the design and implementation of strong performance metrics:

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.

Having reviewed the current draft of your State Plan, we are deeply concerned about the lack of good data points regarding the size and composition of New Jersey's disability community. In fact, the only solid statistics on individuals with disabilities in New Jersey are listed on page 19 of your Combined State Plan. In this section, the State Plan looks at annual averages of "individuals with disabilities between 2010 and 2014." While we are glad to see the references to labor force participation versus employment or unemployment rates, there are few hard numbers here. In fact, there are no further details on what types of disabilities people have in New Jersey nor is there any insightful statistics about youth with disabilities. There are no clear numbers on how many youth experience disabilities nor is there any clarity around how many are aging out of the school system. Despite strong language around the integration of Employment First efforts into the WIOA process, we are deeply troubled about the lack of good data points and the absence of solid performance metrics around people with disabilities.

Greater precision is needed for the workforce system to evolve to tap into the labor resource that the disability community represents. More information is needed about the composition of New Jersey's disability community and clearer data is needed about what types of disabilities make up the total number. Further, your state plan lacks a clear sense of how many youth have disabilities in New Jersey and thereby it will be more difficult for your state to focus on empowering them. Lastly, we are concerned the current draft of your State Plan does not satisfy the specific requirements of Section 3 of WIOA that "must include an analysis of the current workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment."

Figure 1.

New Jersey Performance Metrics on Jobs for PWDs



Gov. Chris Christie (R) with Respectability President Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi, Lisa Derx (VP & Gov. Relations of Best Buddies International)

1. 2015 Disability Status Report: New Jersey, DisabilityStatistics.org
2. StateData: The National Report on Employment Services and Outcomes, 2015
3. Annual Disability Statistics Compendium

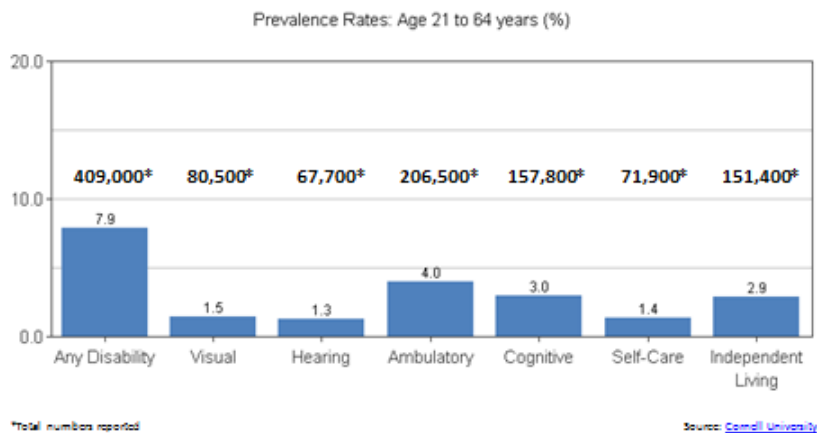
- ❖ 76.5% of persons without disabilities aged 18 to 64 are employed.³
- ❖ New Jersey ranks 17th in the nation for employment of peoples with disabilities³
- ❖ **There is a 38.5 percentage point gap in the Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR) between people with and without disabilities.³**
- ❖ 39.2% of PwDs aged 18 to 64 are employed.³
- ❖ 929,477 persons in NJ have a disability.³
- ❖ 26,700 persons aged 16 to 20 have a disability.¹
- ❖ 423,600 persons aged 21 to 64 have a disability.¹
- ❖ 73,300 PwDs aged 18 to 64 receive benefits.¹
- ❖ In 2014, NJ's total expenditure on SSDI benefits was \$3,430,008,000²
- ❖ Voc. Rehab. received 784 blind applicants and 13,600 general applicants in NJ in 2013.³
- ❖ Voc. Rehab. obtained 4,032 jobs for PwDs and 280 jobs for people who are blind in NJ in 2013.²
- ❖ 21.3% poverty rate among those with disabilities.³

The vast majority of people with disabilities want to work, just like anyone else. A study undertaken last year by New Jersey's own Kessler Foundation found evidence that the overwhelming majority of people with disabilities are striving to work. Despite these statistics, only 39.2 percent of working age people with disabilities is employed in New Jersey. Compare that number to the 76.5 percent people without disabilities who are employed. **That means there is a 38.5 percentage point gap in the Labor Force Participation Rates (LFPR) between people with and without disabilities. This gap is a critical data point that needs to be included in your Combined State Plan and it needs to drive the development of your performance metrics.** Closing this gap will require the focused effort of your workforce system.

We want to help your state to keep moving in the right direction when it comes to increasing employment rate for people with disabilities in New Jersey. Your workforce system is doing innovative work and it is critical that your efforts be optimized to fully tapping into the talents that people with disabilities, especially youth, have to offer. Good data is essential for any attempt to increase the number of people with disabilities who are succeeding in competitive, integrated employment. **We implore you to update the draft to include several additional data points on disability and employment in New Jersey. Below are several charts that suggest what types of data are needed in the final version of your State Plan:**

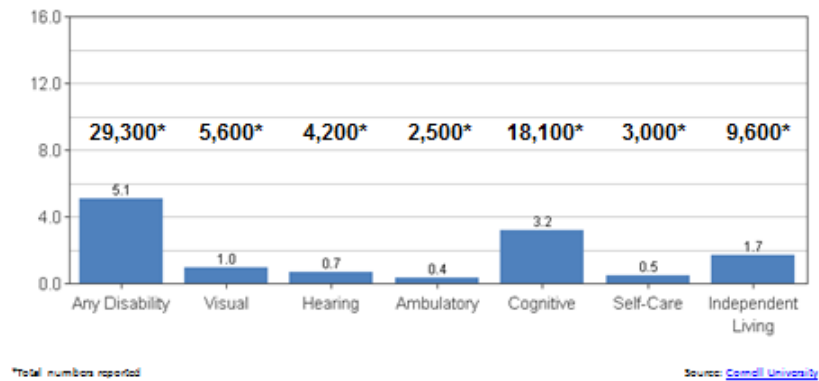
- A. Data is needed on disability types among working age people with disabilities in New Jersey (21-64).** The experience of disability is diverse and includes a wide range of differences both visible and invisible. According to the most recent available data from the Census Bureau, there are 409,000 working age New Jerseyans with disabilities between the ages of 21 and 64. It is critical to distinguish between working age people and those who acquire disabilities due to the aging process. The chart below shows the diverse range of disabilities experienced in your state.

Figure 2.
Prevalence of Disability Among Non-Institutionalized People
Ages 21 to 64 in New Jersey in 2013



- B. Youth with disabilities who are aging in the workforce (ages 16-20).** If New Jersey'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.

Figure 3.
Prevalence of Disability Among Non-Institutionalized People
Ages 16 to 20 in New Jersey in 2013
Prevalence Rates: Age 16 to 20 years (%)



- C. What types of disabilities do transitioning youth have?** This information is critically important because youth with vision, mobility and hearing disabilities need specific types of tools and training, but may otherwise be ready for jobs. To support youth with cognitive disabilities, it will be critical to provide early work experiences.

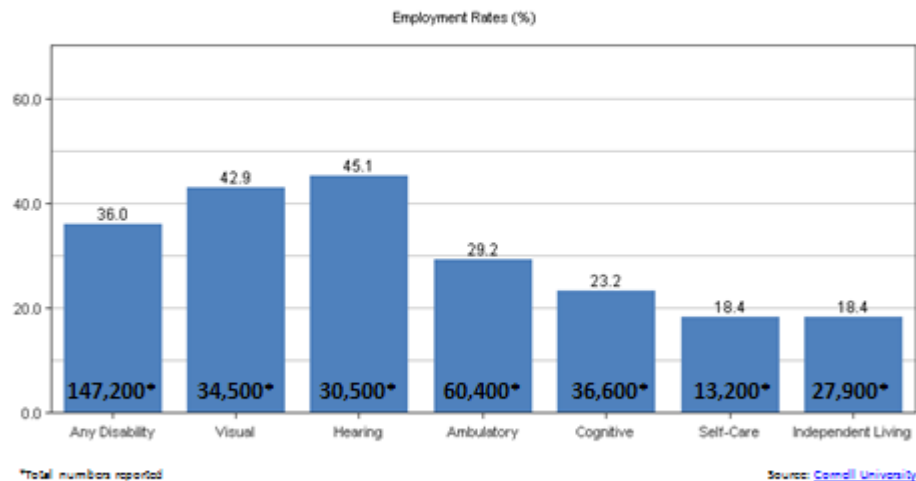
Figure 4.
NJ Ages 6 to 21 Served Under IDEA

	2012	2014
All Disabilities	214,363	211,013
Specific Learning Disability	80,088	76,969
Speech or Language Impairment	46,553	44,527
Intellectual Disability	5,170	5,086
Emotional Disturbance	8,377	8,295
Multiple Disability	18,350	17,419
Hearing Impairment	1,503	1,500
Orthopedic Impairment	450	432
Other Health Impairment	38,130	40,117
Visual Impairment	396	381
Autism	14,572	15,538
Deaf Blindness	14	19
Traumatic Brain Injury	760	730
Developmental Delay	Omitted	Omitted

Source: [Annual Disability Statistics Compendium](#)

D. Labor Force Participation Rates broken down by disability type. From the data, 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 5.
Employment of Non-Institutionalized Working-Age People
(Ages 21 to 64) by Disability Status in New Jersey in 2013



Currently, New Jersey ranks 17th in the national as measured by the employment rate among New Jerseyans with disabilities. As such, it is illustrative to look at the experience of those with disabilities who are succeeding in the world of work. **From the data, we find that 42.9 percent of the 34,500 New Jersey residents who are blind or have vision loss are employed while 45.1 percent of the 30,500 with hearing differences are also employed.** Given the flexibility and availability of assistive technology solutions, the employment rate for this subgroup should be much higher. Many people who are blind or deaf have incredible talent potential that can be unleashed by something as simple as a smartphone.

Sadly, we also see that only 23.2 percent of New Jerseyans with intellectual or developmental disabilities are employed. For this demographic, workforce solutions may take more time and resources. **However, there will be a considerable return on investment if Hawaii'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 New Jersey, 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. 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.

Starting on page 7, the Combined State Plan provides a clear view of both existing job opportunities in New Jersey as well as job growth in emerging sectors. As it stands in 2015, Education and Health Services, Professional and Business Services, Government, and Retail Trade are the “four most prevalent industries” in New Jersey and “accounted for nearly 60%” of employment. Looking to the future, page 8 of the State Plan states that the “New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development has highlighted seven key industry clusters for the state.” These sectors are Advanced Manufacturing; Health Care; Financial Services; Technology; Transportation, Logistics and Distribution; Biopharmaceutical and Life Science; and Leisure, Hospitality and Retail Trade.

In looking to meet the employer talent needs of New Jersey’s most important job sectors, we seriously encourage your workforce system to view people with disabilities as an untapped labor resource that can succeed in many of these job sectors with the right combination of supports and training. Indeed, in fields like health care, hospitality, retail, logistics, and food preparation, employees with disabilities can be the most successful employees. The job gains in these sectors offer a great opportunity for focused strategies to sustain and build on outcomes being achieved among people with disabilities. **Below are our thoughts on how to do that:**

a. Health Care and Elder Care:

The rapid emerging talent needs in health care represent both a challenge and an opportunity for New Jersey’s workforce system and the nation as a whole. 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. Further, as stated on page 9, it is great opportunity because “New Jersey is home to several large and well known healthcare systems” and “the Health Care industry was the only industry to gain employment throughout the recent recession.” This is a topic that needs to be examined closely and has implications for people with disabilities who want to work.

In looking at the “Health Care Industry Cluster” on page 23 of the Combined State Plan, we see very clearly how important this sector is to New Jersey’s economy. “Health care cluster contributed over \$35 billion to New Jersey’s Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2013” and represents “roughly 7 percent of all state output.” Further, the talent needs among health care employers are divided in three ways. To quote the State Plan, “Health care cluster employment is comprised of three industry groups: ambulatory health care services (46%), hospitals (33%) and nursing and residential care facilities (21%).” **People with disabilities can and should be part of the solution for each of these three growth areas.**

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.

In past years, youth with disabilities in New Jersey had limited access to the type of school to work transition programs offered by Project Search. However, things are changing rapidly. Beginning later this year, a Project Search site is being launched thanks to collaboration between “[Bergen County, Hackensack University Medical Center and Holy Name Medical Center](#).” The goal is to give young people with a range of intellectual and developmental disabilities the chance to learn critical skills and gain needed experience for them to ultimately become successful. Additionally, NJ Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services and NJ Division of Developmental Disabilities (NJDDD) are collaborating [to launch a Project Search site based in Union County, New Jersey](#). Lastly, [at the Y.A.L.E. School in Cherry Hill](#), VR staff and educators are working “to launch Project SEARCH, a nationally acclaimed employment program for students with autism and related disabilities.” Once these worksites are fully operational, they will be a pathway for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities to successfully transition into the workforce.

In fact, the State Plan reports on page 210 that the Business Outreach Unit of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) will be “will be working in these counties with the businesses to establish opportunities for career exploration for students participating in Project SEARCH.”

We are pleased that Union County, the Y.A.L.E. School, and Bergen County are launching Project Search sites. However, we feel there is a missed opportunity by not working to achieve returns to scale. What we mean is that the startling numbers of jobs in the growing health care sector of a unique opportunity to rapidly expand the number of Project Search sites in New Jersey. As discussed above, the demand for health care and social assistance workers is rapidly growing. As such, we recommend that New Jersey invest in increasing the number of Project Search sites across your state. **We encourage New Jersey to follow the example of Wisconsin, Florida, and other states that are rapidly expanding Project Search.** Wisconsin for example started with three Project Search sites and is expanding to twenty seven sites in total.

Governor Scott Walker has become a champion of the Project Search model because it is so effective in producing outstanding employees and cost-effective to implement. Wisconsin is a living example of the return on investment that comes from empowering youth with disabilities through the transformative power of a job. As such, we seriously encourage state leaders in New Jersey to learn from the experiences of the dedicated state officials, VR counselors, workforce professionals, and special educators who have increased Wisconsin’s Project Search programs. 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. Transportation, Logistics and Distribution (TLD) - Key Sector, Key Opportunity:

As stated on page 9 of the Combined State Plan, Transportation, Logistics and Distribution (TLD) is a critical component of New Jersey’s economy thanks to your state’s “location and infrastructure.” As such, people with disabilities should be a key part of your state’s plans to meet the talent needs of this sector. As we stated above, Walgreens, under the leadership of Randy Lewis, has garnered a great deal of media attention for their disability hiring efforts. To that, we would add that the experience of Walgreen’s distribution centers in Anderson, South Carolina and Windsor, Connecticut offer critical lessons both on how to build a more inclusive workforce as well as the bottom line benefits for doing so. Studies done of that effort definitely

demonstrates the business imperative for hiring employees with disabilities. “A study of Walgreens distribution centers” [conducted in 2012 showed that](#) “workers with disabilities had a turnover rate 48% lower than that of the nondisabled population, with medical expenses 67% lower and time-off expenses 73% lower.”

Walgreen is not alone in benefiting from employees with disabilities working in their supply chain and pursuing careers in logistics. Many companies, including [UPS](#), [Wal-Mart](#), and [OfficeMax have proven records of success](#). 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.”](#)

We recommend that LWD and DVRS work together to create career pathway for youth with disabilities to be trained to succeed in New Jersey’s distribution sector. We hope that you will reach out to employers with existing talent needs and identify specific opportunities to train people with disabilities for roles in this sector. Further, we highly recommend that you connect directly with the Kessler Foundation based in West Orange. Not only are they are forefront of rehabilitation research, they are also working in multiple states to support highly effective models of training youth with disabilities to succeed. The “cluster model” which they are funding is an innovative example of “a public/private partnership to coordinate services for job-seekers with disabilities, with a single point of contact for employers.” This type of partnership could be hugely beneficial to your state’s citizens with disabilities by creating [“connections among employers, public and private agencies, and schools to reach young adults with disabilities who are in transition from school to work.”](#)

c. Jobs for New Jerseyans with disabilities in Leisure, Hospitality and Retail (LHR):

Having reviewed the current draft of your Combined State Plan, we feel that significant opportunities exist for New Jerseyans with disabilities in the “Leisure, Hospitality and Retail (LHR).” As stated on page 9 of the State Plan, this sector “is the largest of the seven industry clusters in terms of employment with nearly twenty-five percent of statewide employment in 2014.” Not only is “Leisure and Hospitality” described as a “super sector” in your Combined State Plan, retail trade is grouped together “based on similar occupational requirements.”

In each of these job sectors, 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.

As we quoted in the introduction to our Public Comments, New Jersey recently became an Employment First state. We are glad to see both Employment First rhetoric and policies integrated into the larger WIOA implementation efforts. In particular, we are glad to see the strong commitment made by New Jersey on page 41 to “expand career pathways for individuals with disabilities and to ensure that an increasing number of individuals with disabilities obtain a postsecondary industry-valued credential or degree.” Further, as DVRS works to operationalize “the Employment First principles adopted by Governor Christie” who hope that your “long-term

career pathway development” efforts will be focused on the growing sectors of New Jersey’s economy.

Missouri offers an outstanding example of how to partner with a specific sector in order to create career pathways for youth with disabilities. 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](#). Your State Board, 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.

Retail is also a sector with high turnover costs to employers and as such, people with disabilities can be a cost-effective labor solution. We encourage your workforce system to recruit and partner with employers in the retail space where the higher retention rates of employees with disabilities can positively impact the company’s bottom line. While Walgreens has largely gained media attention for their distribution center efforts, [they have been working to translate their successes into the retail space](#). 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. Science, Tech, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and The Autism Advantage:

Technology is also a key “cluster” listed among the sector strategies outlined in the New Jersey’s Combined State Plan. To quote page 10 of the State Plan, “The technology cluster is made of industry groups” meaning there are a wide variety of opportunities in “the professional, scientific and technical service, wholesale trade, manufacturing, and information industry sectors.” As your state looks at supporting growth in this sector, we encourage you to include people with disabilities in your calculations.

Specifically, 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. Companies including [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.](#) **New Jersey should be looking at ways to follow this model.**

Together, New Jersey 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. **When a student's IEP and/or Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) are being formulated, STEM-related jobs should be examined where appropriate.**

e. State jobs and supplier diversity 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 New Jersey's state governments is going to be impacted by the cresting wave of Baby Boomers retiring.

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.**

3. Busting Stigmas, Myths, and Misconceptions Should Be a Key Part of your State's 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.](#)

As such, we recommend that New Jersey's Combined State 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.** It is important to understand that the barriers to gaining employment are not only physical. Attitudinal barriers can be just as detrimental as physical inaccessibility. Indeed, the stigmas, myths, misconceptions, and stereotypes that impact New Jerseyans with disabilities are serious barriers that your workforce system needs to address.

A great example of what we have in mind comes from South Dakota, which currently has the highest employment rate for people with disabilities of any state in the nation. [Governor Dugaard recently launched](#) something called the "[Ability for Hire Campaign](#)" which aims to fight stigma by showcasing the incredible value that employees with disabilities bring to the work place. This is a model that New Jersey should seriously study and replicate.

As we will reiterate multiple times in our comments, getting employers engaged and talking about how employees with disabilities benefit the bottom line of their companies is the necessary step for achieving improved outcomes. In terms of potential employer partners to help with this campaign, 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 that can be an incredible resource for your work.](#)

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. New Jersey needs a public relations campaign that will inspire New Jerseyans 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 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 New Jersey 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, which can be found on our website, offer insight on how to implement such a multilayered approach.

4. New Jersey's Section 503 efforts offer a significant opportunity 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. Most State Plans lack references to the employment opportunities and talent challenges created by the recently implemented Section 503 regulations regarding federal contractors and subcontractors. However, we were pleased to find Section 503 specifically identified among the "Goals to Further Align Vocational Rehabilitation with WIOA Title I One-Stop System" listed on page 89 of your State Plan. We are very glad to

see a commitment to “Engage employers’ and “Take advantage of the new 503 regulations.” Further, this goal outline several strategic actions to be taken including engaging “LWD talent networks”, finding opportunities “for work trials through internships”, and replicating “Schedule A targeted hiring events throughout the state.” Further, on page 210, assisting “federal contractors in meeting their 503 requirements” is listed as a core responsibility of the “Business outreach unit (BOU)” recently developed by DVRS. We are likewise pleased to see that DVRS has engaged in efforts oriented towards two the most important industries of New Jersey’s economy. Specifically on page 256 and 257, the State Plan reports that DVRS has “has worked with the financial services industry and the transportation, logistics and distribution industry” given that “many of these industries have federal contracts and are subject to the Section 503 regulations.”

Section 503 and [the new 7% utilization goal set for companies](#) to recruit, hire, and retain qualified individuals with disabilities in all job categories, is a significant opportunity. We are pleased to see that New Jersey is responding to this chance with a strategy focused on competitive advantage, not just compliance. The proactive efforts listed in the state plan mirror recommendations that we have made to other states and we are grateful for your leadership. As these efforts move forward, there are several companies that should be a priority in your outreach efforts. These companies include: Lockheed Martin Corp., American Auto Logistics LP, ITT Corp., SAIC INC., and Computer Science Corp. Further, we hope DVRS and the other elements of your workforce system learn from these companies and share their lessons learned in order to teach companies not impacted by the regulations how to effectively employ, engage, and retain workers or customers with disabilities. More detailed information regarding federal contracts in [New Jersey can be found here](#).

5. Effective employer engagement depends on fully bringing your state’s affiliate chapter of the US Business Leadership Network to the WIOA table:

Improving employment outcomes in New Jersey very much depends on being an employer driven paradigm shift. As we mentioned above, it is vital to emphasize the business case for hiring people with disabilities again and again for a simple reason. Government action alone-- even through vocation rehabilitation -- is insufficient to improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities. The necessary condition for achieving greater integrated employment for individuals with disabilities is engaging employers and meeting their talent needs.

As such we were deeply disappointed to see that no attention was given to one of the most important assets that New Jersey has in terms of making the business case for hiring people with disabilities. The New Jersey Business Leadership Network (NJBLN) is an affiliate chapter of the national BLN, and we are disappointed to see that it is not yet at the WIOA table. To quote the affiliate chapter’s mission statement NJBLN “is an employer-led endeavor that promotes best employment practice and provides enhanced employment opportunities for skilled job candidates with disabilities.” The NJBLN should be a critical partner to the overall employer engagement efforts. They can persuasively make the business-to-business case for hiring employees with disabilities. As such, moving forward, we hope your workforce system will take fully advantage of this potential partnership.

In looking for ways for the workforce system to capitalize on the resources that an affiliate BLN chapter can provide, we suggest that New Jersey 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

New Jersey 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.

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

One of the often-neglected opportunities for people with disabilities is the training opportunities offered by apprenticeship programs. **While the current draft of New Jersey's Combined State Plan touches on the opportunities that apprenticeships offer, it lacks the perspective of training people with disabilities, especially youth with disabilities.**

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. **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 them need to refine and design training programs that maximally inclusive of people with diverse talents](#).

Likewise, in too many other states, [VR staff is unaware or disconnected from the program officers who provide critical support to apprenticeship programs](#). Such innovative partnerships and improved accessibility are key elements of realizing 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 fields such as construction, but they can also be incredibly useful in health care and computer jobs. 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.

7. Overcome the gap between disability 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.

8. 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 New Jersey's Combined State Plan on page 138 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.**

For example, it is critical that the assurances listed on page 161 for Title 1-B Programs are matched up to specific strategies to achieve the "delivery of career and training services to individuals." Further, the Wagner-Peyser Assurances on page 178 need careful implementation efforts as do the Adult Basic Education Assurances listed on page 188 and the VR assurances on pages 267 through 270.

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, 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, then New Jersey is facing a serious problem.

9. Avoid the Opportunity Costs of Focusing Too Much on One-Stop Centers.
Programmatic and Database Accessibility and Privacy Are 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.

The workforce needs of state economies are evolving rapidly thanks to technology and globalization. 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.

10. 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. 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. However, it's important to ensure that online resources enhance the effort of your workforce system.

New Jersey 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. In addition, New Jersey should be careful not to waste money trying to re-invent the wheel in creating online resources because [ASKJAN.org, the US Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment, our organization and others also offer free toolkits, webinars and training opportunities.](#) It would be helpful to collaborate with these groups however to ensure that the best tools are created to fit the training and information needs on these issues. Since you already "receive technical assistance" from ODEP, and they have good resources available, **you could look into collaborating with them directly to disseminate the free resources they have available.**

11. 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.**”

Starting on page 2, your Combined State Plan does much to outline the specific requirements of “the process of appointing members to the local Workforce Development Board (LWDB).” When it comes to this process, we seriously encourage your local boards to invest effort at recruiting self-advocates who can bring their lived experience to the LWDB’s efforts. Even a non-voting, ex-officio member can bring critical perspectives that improve a local boards’ efforts overall. 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.

12. 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 issue is critically important for both people with disabilities and other low-income communities. Many people with disabilities do not drive. Others cannot afford private transportation.

In terms of New Jersey’s Combined State Plan, responsibility for transportation issues have been devolved to local WDBs responsible for the “North, Central, and South regional plans.” For example, on page 49, the State Plan reports that “The coordination of transportation and other supportive services, as appropriate, for the region” should be included in their regional planning. Further, in Section D focused on “Coordination and Co-enrollment with the WorkFirst New Jersey (WFNJ) program”, “Referral and access to work support services” includes transportation as a responsibility of LWD. Likewise, “transportation” is listed among the activities covered by “general support service expenditures” on page 97 in Section F. Supportive Services Provision and Coordination. Transportation is also listed on page 121 as an element of “Regional Coordination” to be addressed by the “Three workforce planning regions” in your state. Lastly, on page 311, as a part of the SCSEP effort, the State Plan says that “Every effort will be made to obtain job-related transportation services for the participants from local resources at no cost to the program.”

We are glad to see these efforts and we appreciate the flexibility allowed for local policies or regional efforts to create transportation solutions. However, transportation is very often cited among the biggest barriers among people with disabilities. Our review of the current draft of New Jersey’s Combined State Plan left us with the impression that there is missed opportunity here. As New Jersey moves forward with the regional plans and setting local policies, we hope that close attention will be given to transportation challenges among New Jerseyans with disabilities.

People with disabilities need 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 here. 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.

13. Aging workers and those who acquire disabilities must be specifically addressed:

Older workers face disparate challenges as they age and the Combined State Plan makes it clear on page 292 that “New Jersey is committed to helping older workers obtain employment and self-sufficiency.” On that page, the State Plan specifically outlines the efforts being undertaken through the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP). Likewise, on page 18 of the State Plan, we see a statistical summary of both the Labor Force Participation Rates and the Unemployment Rates of older workers in New Jersey. **What is missing from these sections of the Combined State Plan is a proactive approach focused on supporting 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 know from page 296 that “LWD continues to develop strategies to keep pace with workforce needs through planning, advocacy, public awareness, and collaboration with other organizations focused on the well-being of older New Jersey workers.” As such, as your state plans to address the challenges faced by older workers, we highly recommend that you look to Iowa for innovative practices that are empowering older workers to stay in the workforce.

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.

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

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.](#)

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

There are several points where the current draft of New Jersey's Combined State Plan addresses the unique workforce challenges facing ex-offenders as they attempt to reenter society. Starting on page 184, your State Plan outlines the priorities and efforts being made by programs under the "LWD Adult Education and Family Literacy Act." While the funding under AEFLA is strictly limited, "programs for individuals with disabilities as well as other special needs" are listed as the second priority of service among "criminal offenders in the correctional facilities as well as for other institutional individuals." Further, on page 317, New Jersey's Combined State Plan provides a summary of the activities being carried out under the Reintegration of Ex-Offenders Program. This section specifically outlines the workforce development efforts being done to support returning citizens. "Physical or mental disability" are listed among the specific barriers to employment that are addressed through this program. We are encouraged to see the stated commitment "to meet customers where they are by creating a proactive approach to promote and serve special populations." Likewise, we are glad to see the connections between SETC, "the Department of Corrections and the Juvenile Justice Commission" to "align educational and training opportunities for incarcerated individuals." This work is critical because far too often states neglect to add the lens of disability to their corrections education or ex-offender reintegration efforts. The need for this type of work is clear.

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 identify how many of the individuals in the corrections system and in the ex-offender pipeline have disabilities. There are two related challenges here. First, there is a need to identify potential disability issues among inmates during the intake process and ensure their needs can be met. Ideally, this type of assessment could be done within the first thirty days of their sentence. Second, are the issues related to preparing inmates for their release and reintegration into society? Whether it is mental health supports or learning accommodations helping ex-offenders to find employ when they are home is a critical workforce development challenge. It is a challenge that only grows more complicated when a disability remains unaddressed. The price paid for ignoring these issue are higher rates of recidivism and greater costs to society. Addressing these issues at the beginning and at the end of the corrections process will have downstream effects and hopefully will enable states to address these issues of workforce, disability, and justice.

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. New Jersey'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.

Sincerely,

**Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi, President
RespectAbility
11333 Woodglen Drive, Suite 102
Rockville, MD 20852**

**Jacob Toporek, Executive Director
N.J. State Association of Jewish Federations
1391 Martine Avenue
Scotch Plains, New Jersey 07076**

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

	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			
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

NJ and Jobs for PwDs

Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi, President

www.RespectAbilityUSA.org

New Jersey



Gov. Chris Christie (R) with Respectability President Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi, Lisa Derx (VP & Gov. Relations of Best Buddies International)

- ❖ 76.5% of persons without disabilities aged 18 to 64 are employed.³
- ❖ New Jersey ranks 17th in the nation for employment of peoples with disabilities³
- ❖ **There is a 38.5 % employment gap between people with and without disabilities.³**
- ❖ 39.2% of PwDs aged 18 to 64 are employed.³
- ❖ 929,477 persons in NJ have a disability.³
- ❖ 26,700 persons aged 16 to 20 have a disability.¹
- ❖ 423,600 persons aged 21 to 64 have a disability.¹
- ❖ 73,300 PwDs aged 18 to 64 receive benefits.¹
- ❖ In 2014, NJ's total expenditure on SSDI benefits was \$3,430,008,000³
- ❖ Voc. Rehab. received 784 blind applicants and 13,600 general applicants in NJ in 2013.³
- ❖ Voc. Rehab. obtained 4,032 jobs for PwDs and 280 jobs for people who are blind in NJ in 2013.^{2,3}
- ❖ 21.3% poverty rate among those with disabilities.³

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

New Jersey Data

		People with Disabilities (%)		People without Disabilities (%)	
		2013	2014	2013	2014
Poverty ¹	US	28.7	28.2	13.6	13.0
	NJ	22.0	21.3	9.3	9.0
Smoking ¹	US	25.4	24.5	16.2	15.3
	NJ	20.6	20.4	14.5	14.0
Obesity ¹	US	40.1	41.1	25.0	25.2
	NJ	38.0	39.8	23.7	24.0
Employment ¹	US	33.9	34.4	74.2	75.4
	NJ	36.6	39.2	75.1	76.5

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

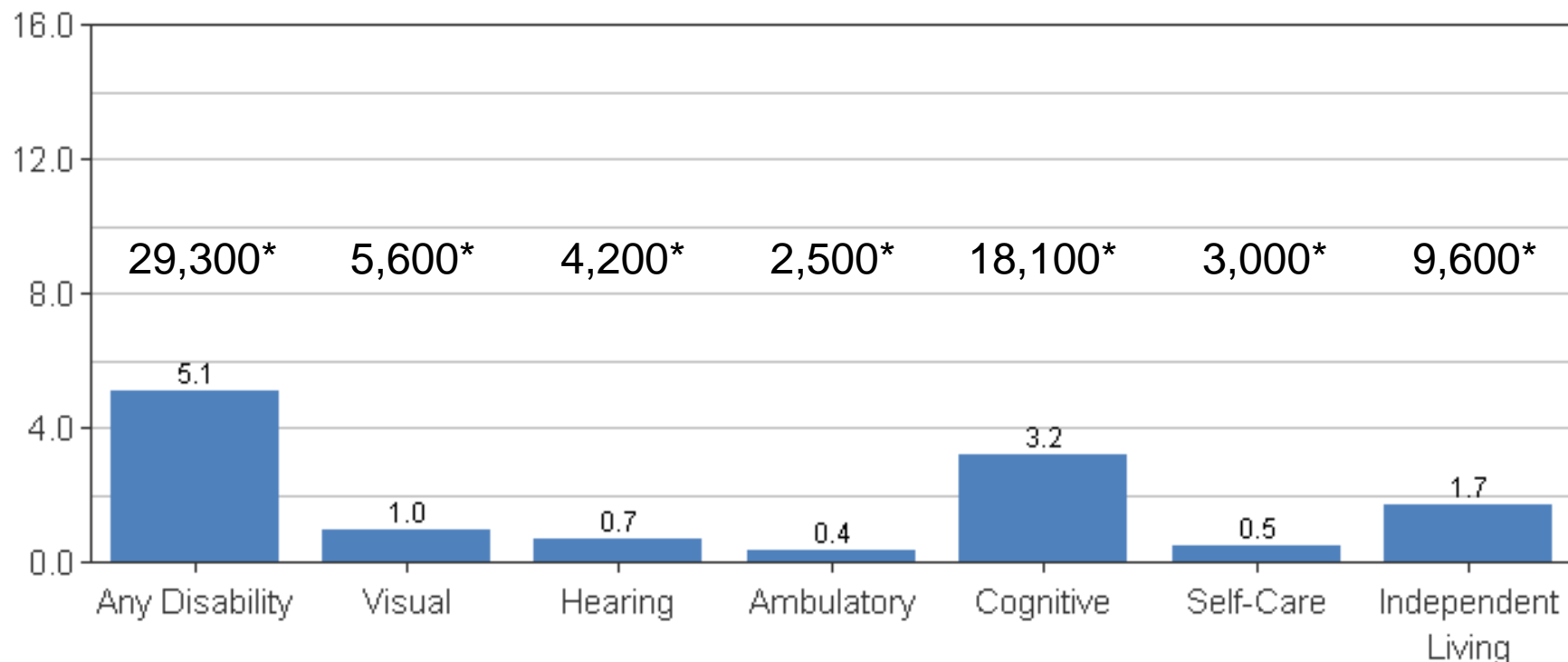
NJ Ages 6 to 21 Served Under IDEA

	2012	2014
All Disabilities	214,363	211,013
Specific Learning Disability	80,088	76,969
Speech or Language Impairment	46,553	44,527
Intellectual Disability	5,170	5,086
Emotional Disturbance	8,377	8,295
Multiple Disability	18,350	17,419
Hearing Impairment	1,503	1,500
Orthopedic Impairment	450	432
Other Health Impairment	38,130	40,117
Visual Impairment	396	381
Autism	14,572	15,538
Deaf Blindness	14	19
Traumatic Brain Injury	760	730
Developmental Delay	Omitted	Omitted

Source: [Annual Disability Statistics Compendium](#)

Prevalence of Disability Among Non-Institutionalized People Ages 16 to 20 in New Jersey in 2012

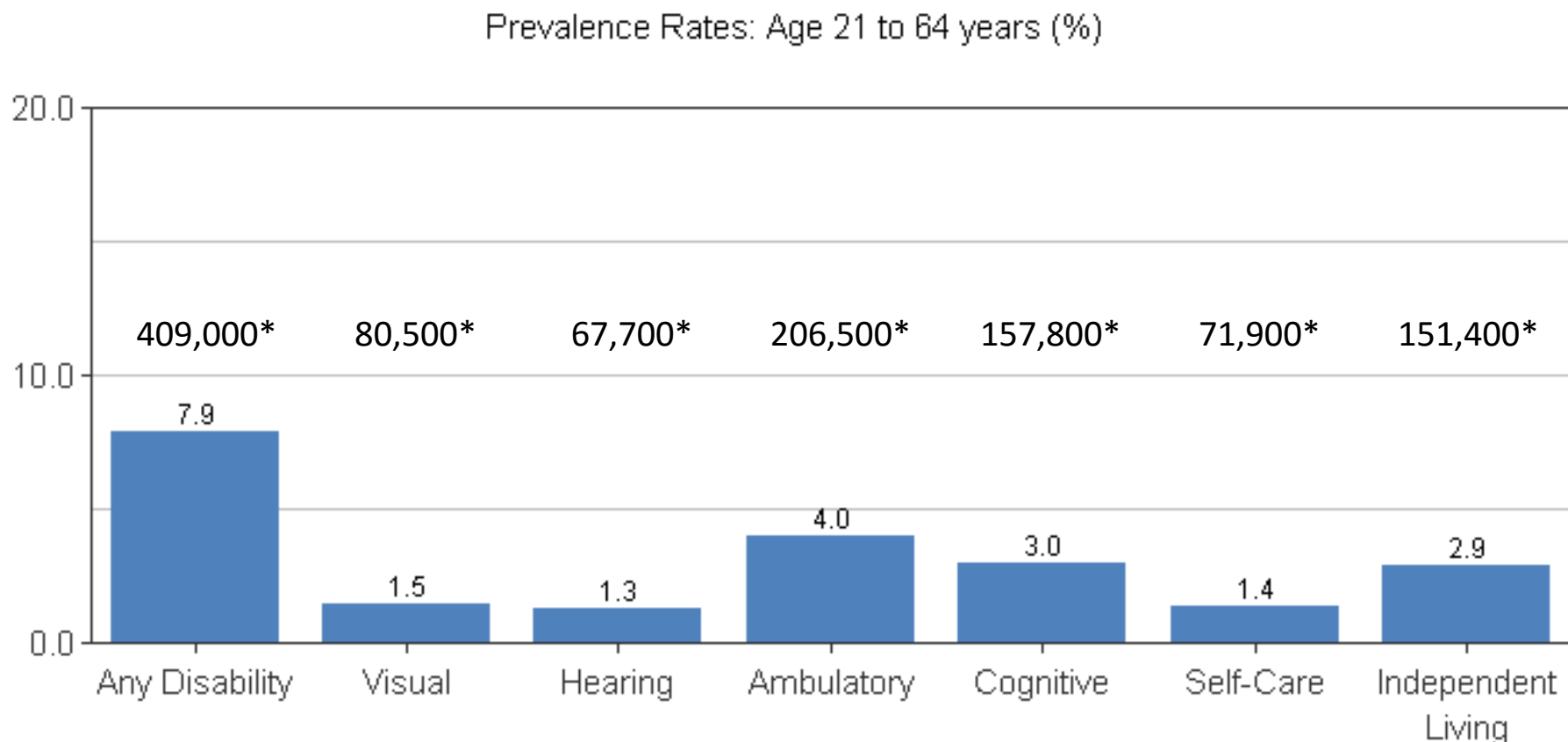
Prevalence Rates: Age 16 to 20 years (%)



*Total numbers reported

Source: [Cornell University](#)

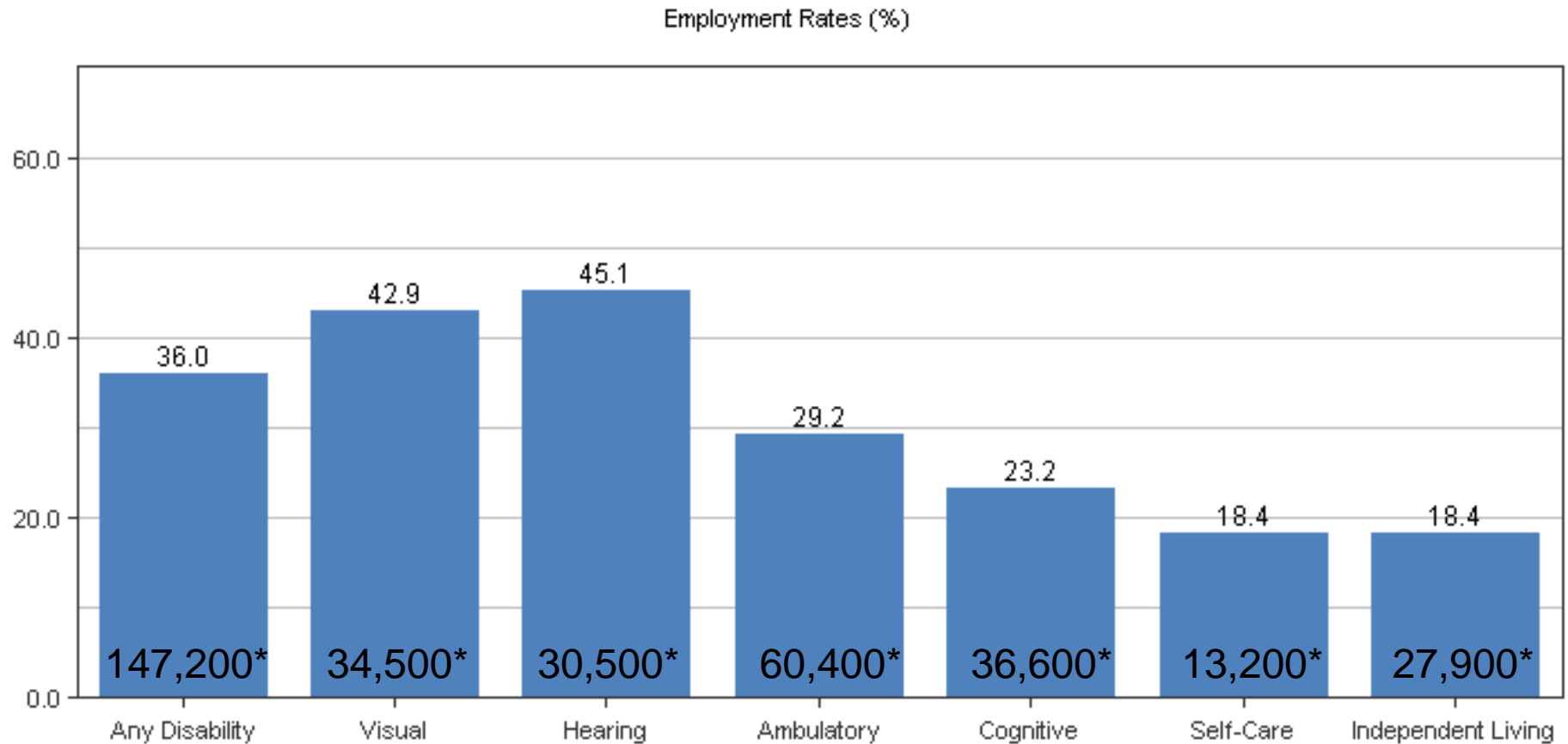
Prevalence of Disability Among Non-Institutionalized People Ages 21 to 64 in New Jersey in 2012



*Total numbers reported

Source: [Cornell University](#)

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



*Total numbers reported

Source: [Cornell University](#)

Project SEARCH: Program Description

- ❖ One school year or 9 months.
- ❖ 10 – 12 young adults with a variety of intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- ❖ Instructor and job coaches.
- ❖ Immersed in host business culture.
- ❖ Rotations through unpaid internships with continual feedback.
- ❖ Outcome of employment in the community.

Project SEARCH: HUGE \$ SAVER!

The Project SEARCH
Definition of a Successful
Outcome:

- ❖ Competitive employment in an integrated setting.
- ❖ Year-round work.
- ❖ 16 hours per week or more.
- ❖ Minimum wage or higher.

- ❖ 273 programs in 44 states.
- ❖ 2500 young people per year.
- ❖ 60% healthcare, 40% broad mix of business types.
- ❖ 68% employment.
- ❖ 88% employee benefit eligible.
 - 35% take employee benefits, usually at 5 years.
 - Benefits alone save roughly 1 million dollars over a lifetime.
 - Family involvement curriculum to drive familial change in attitude.

Contact Project SEARCH

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:

- Lockheed Martin Corp.
- American Auto Logistics LP
- ITT Corp.
- SAIC INC.
- Computer Science Corp.

For the complete list see the [fed spending website](http://www.fedspending.org/fpds/fpds.php?stateCode=NJ&sortp=r&detail=-1&dtype=T&reptype=p&database=fpds&fiscal_year=2012&submit=GO)

http://www.fedspending.org/fpds/fpds.php?stateCode=NJ&sortp=r&detail=-1&dtype=T&reptype=p&database=fpds&fiscal_year=2012&submit=GO

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

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

Jobs in New Jersey

- ❖ Economic driver industries for New Jersey are transportation logistics and distribution, life sciences, advanced manufacturing, financial services, health care, and Tech and entrepreneurship.

<http://www.njsetc.net/njsetc/planning/>

- ❖ [Click here for your Workforce plan](http://www.njsetc.net/njsetc/planning/)

<http://www.njsetc.net/njsetc/planning/>

- ❖ [Click here for your Workforce board](http://workforceinvestmentworks.com/workforce_board_info.asp?st=NJ)

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

Resources

- ❖ StateData: The National Report on Employment Services and Outcomes, 2013 (data from 2012)
- ❖ 2012 Disability Status Report United States, Cornell University, 2012: 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
11333 Woodglenn Drive Suite 102
Rockville, MD 20852**

www.RespectAbilityUSA.org

Cell: (202) 365 – 0787

Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi

President

JenniferM@RespectAbilityUSA.org