

Iowa in 2012

152,912 new workers
needed

A RESPONSE TO
MEETING IOWA'S
WORKFORCE
CHALLENGE

Prepared by the
Iowa Commission of Persons with Disabilities

Employing the Talents of Iowans with Disabilities to Address a Major Workforce Challenge

Iowans with disabilities can be the employees that will be needed in the workforce by 2012 to improve economic development. This population should be trained and educated to provide a workforce that is skilled, diverse and qualified to perform a wide variety of jobs to meet the needs of a growing economy.

Planning

Iowa has the infrastructure in place to achieve this goal and currently ranks thirteenth in the nation in employing their citizens with disabilities. The time is now to build on these accomplishments by putting more Iowans with disabilities to work to help them move from tax-users to tax payers. This will improve the diversity in our economy, increase the level of health care coverage for Iowa's children, and move Iowa toward the skilled workforce needed by 2012.

In 2005, statistics indicated that the employment rate for Iowans with disabilities was 44.3%. Therefore the 55.7% of the population with disabilities in the working age of 21 through 64 is available for employment. This group constitutes approximately 108,000 (70%) of the 152,912 employees needed by 2012.

Iowans with disabilities have less education and vocational training than their non-disabled counterparts with 17.5% having less than a high school education compared to 6.8% of non-disabled Iowans. Furthermore, only 11.6% of Iowans with disabilities have a Bachelor degree or higher while 27.8% of the non-disabled population has attained that level of education.

While approximately 2300 individuals annually become employed through the efforts of the Iowa Department for the Blind, Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Iowa Division of Persons with Disabilities and Deaf Services of Iowa, new individuals enter this unemployed workforce daily. A majority of people acquire or develop disabilities later in life. As people survive medical traumas, illness or accidents and the population ages, disability is impacting an increasing number of Iowans and their families. This growing population includes Veterans with disabilities. Disability crosses all ethnic and cultural communities in our state.

Investment

We recommend Iowa invest in citizens with disabilities to encourage them to fill the approaching workforce challenge. The allocation of additional resources could

- Identify employment opportunities that lead to career advancement and create the expectation of employment
- evaluate citizen's abilities and supports/accommodations needed
- market services that are available to individuals and to businesses seeking qualified applicants
- provide training, technology and job placement services
- promote and support hiring and retention of employees with disabilities

Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Disability Demographics and Statistics. (2005). 2005 Disability Status Reports. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University

Iowa Works Campaign. Meeting Iowa's Workforce Challenge. The Workforce Alliance. Washington, DC