

**U.S. Department of Labor
Office of Inspector General
Office of Audit**

BRIEFLY...

Highlights of Report Number: 25-10-001-03-390 to the Assistant Secretaries for Employment and Training, Administration and Management, and Disability Employment Policy.

WHY READ THE REPORT

Unemployment among persons with disabilities remains high, with a reported unemployment rate of 13.8 percent in December 2009. Moreover, the Employment and Training Administration estimates that an additional 20 million working age individuals with disabilities have dropped out of the labor market.

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) was designed to provide employment and training services to assist eligible individuals in finding, and qualifying for, meaningful employment through a One-Stop service delivery system. Section 188 of WIA requires that recipients of WIA financial assistance provide persons with disabilities equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from One-Stop services.

WHY OIG CONDUCTED THE REVIEW

The review was initiated in response to a Congressional request, and addressed the following questions:

1. What are DOL's goals for serving persons with disabilities?
2. What information does DOL have regarding the characteristics and needs of persons with disabilities?
3. What types of services are persons with disabilities receiving from the One-Stop System?
4. What outcomes are achieved by persons with disabilities who use the One-Stop System?
5. What evaluations of WIA services to persons with disabilities has DOL conducted?

The review covered services and outcomes for exiters in the WIA Adult, Dislocated Workers, and Youth programs between Program Years 2003-2008. OIG based its review solely on information provided by DOL; we did not test its accuracy or reliability.

READ THE FULL REPORT

To view the report, please go to:

<http://www.oig.dol.gov/public/reports/oa/2010/25-10-001-03-390.pdf>

March 2010

INFORMATION ON DOL'S EFFORTS TO ENSURE ACCESS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES TO THE ONE-STOP CAREER SYSTEM

WHAT OIG FOUND

Except for veterans, for whom Federal law mandates priority of services, the One-Stop system as a whole does not give preference to serving any particular group, and the Department has not established quantifiable goals for serving persons with disabilities through the One-Stop system.

Information DOL has on the characteristics and needs of WIA participants with disabilities is limited. Disclosure of a disability is voluntary and many participants may not self-disclose, likely resulting in under-reporting of the number of participants with disabilities. The characteristics reported indicate whether a participant has a disability but not the nature of the disability. Information regarding the nature of the disability could help States and local workforce agencies to develop appropriate service strategies.

Overall, persons with disabilities receive the same basic services – such as job search, case management, and occupational skills training – as those without disabilities, although their rates of participation in those services may vary. DOL's most visible initiative for helping persons with disabilities access and benefit from the One-Stop system has been the Disability Navigator Program. Disability Navigator positions were established in 42 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands to better inform people with disabilities about the work support programs available at One-Stop Career Centers.

Program exiters with disabilities generally had lower entered employment rates compared to all exiters. For example, WIA Adult exiters with disabilities had a 53.4 percent entered employment rate compared to 68.1 percent for all exiters. However, the employment retention rate for exiters with disabilities was about the same as the retention rate achieved by all exiters.

Since 2003, the Department has conducted several independent evaluations of its initiatives to improve One-Stop services for persons with disabilities, including evaluations of the Disability Program Navigator initiative and various demonstration projects. Ongoing or planned evaluations include an evaluation of the \$24 million Disability Employment Initiative, and a review of strategies used by States that serve a high percentage of youth with disabilities while meeting their performance goals.