

# The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act: What it means for Iowa Youth, Families and Schools

## What is WIOA?

The **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)** was signed into federal law July 2014. The purpose is to “**empower individuals with disabilities to maximize employment, economic self-sufficiency, independence, and inclusion in and integration into society.**”

The goal of WIOA is for everyone, including those with disabilities, to have **competitive and integrated community employment**, (work where an individual is paid at least minimum wage, is eligible for the same benefits and advancement opportunities as employees in similar positions and works with people who do not have disabilities).

WIOA replaces the Workforce Investment Act as the main law on workforce development and increases the focus on youth with disabilities and preparing them to be successful employees. WIOA funds programs that help young adults with disabilities gain skills, experiences and employment. Families will see WIOA at work in Iowa schools two ways:

- **Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation (IVRS)** staff will be more involved with students ages 14-21 and IEP activities if a student is eligible for IVRS
- **Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)** activities provide students with disabilities job exploration, education, experiences and training. Turn the page for more information on Pre-ETS!

**WIOA** strengthens the workforce and benefits people who otherwise may have employment barriers. The law:

- **Expands** training and education options
- **Assists** disadvantaged or unemployed youth and adults while they learn/practice skills
- **Coordinates** the plans and polices of state programs
- **Increases** focus on serving people with significant disabilities



## Where are the services?

WIOA has the potential for significant advancement in employment of people with disabilities! American Job Centers, which are Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) offices, assist individuals with training and employment. WIOA increases the requirements for career centers to meet the needs of job seekers with disabilities, including those in need significant supports. They also have programs designed to help youth reach their career and educational goals. For youth ages 14-21 who are in school, services may include assessment, instruction or career counseling from IVRS. For out-of-school youth ages 16-24, Title 1 of WIOA outlines available services. You can read more about these services at [www.doleta.gov/wioa](http://www.doleta.gov/wioa).

Find an American Job Center near you!

[www.careeronestop.org](http://www.careeronestop.org)



## What services will youth receive?

**Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)** are provided to students with disabilities ages 14-21 by IVRS together with schools.

**Pre-ETS** activities are available to all students with disabilities. The focus is on collaboration between IVRS, AEAs, schools and families. It is likely these services will look different within each school district. Schools, IVRS and other local service (like IWD) should work together and determine how best to meet local needs by restructuring current practices or, if necessary, developing new programs.

**Pre-ETS include:**

- **Job Exploration Counseling** is assistance provided to a student with a disability, helping to learn and understand the demands and required skills to perform a job and make informed choices.
- **Work Based Learning** are active “hands-on” experiences provided in integrated settings where students learn and practice skills.
- **Opportunity Counseling** provides information about post-secondary education or training programs, the enrollment process, skill and admission requirements and available supports.
- **Workplace Readiness Training** develops social and work skills needed for successful employment.
- **Self-Advocacy Instruction** involves training on communicating one’s own needs and opinions.

## Examples of Pre-ETS Activities

Activity	IVRS	Schools	Families
<b>Job Exploration Counseling</b>	Tour a local employer with students show and explain all different jobs and their requirements	Show students videos about different career fields or post high school education programs	Visit places that relate to youth’s interests and could be considered for work opportunities
<b>Work Based Learning</b>	Schedule a short term experience where youth can learn a new skill	Plan and provide job shadowing opportunities in school or community places of employment	Volunteer with the student at a place that matches the youth’s interests or strengths
<b>Counsel on Opportunities</b>	Coordinate tour of training or community employment options in line with student interests	Visit (online or in person) post high school learning or training programs	Have high expectations! Visit education or training options with youth.
<b>Workplace Ready Training</b>	Provide on the job coaching for student at work he/she desires as career	Provide on the job instruction of skills necessary to be competitively employed	Give student responsibilities at home. Ensure student arrives to school/work well groomed, rested and fed.
<b>Self Advocacy Instruction</b>	Practice job interviews and strategies for effective advocacy	Encourage/foster student involvement in IEP and transition planning	Encourage student decision making at home and in community settings

## Shared Responsibilities + Collaboration = Positive Outcomes for Students

WIOA requires state agencies work together to prepare students for employment and support them in meeting their employment goals.

### The Role of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Pre-ETS are provided by IVRS staff unless the activities are required transition services per a student's IEP — then they are provided *together* with schools. IVRS determines if a student is eligible for their services, is responsible for the IPE and may be involved in the IEP for students who are eligible.

### The Role of Schools

WIOA does not change any of the transition requirements of IDEA! It is important that student living, learning and working IEP goals reflect the expectation of competitive integrated employment and the services delivered progress a student toward that goal in order to meet WIOA requirements.

### The Role of Youth and Families

Stay involved and have high expectations! The student and his/her family are necessary members of the IEP and Individual Plan for Employment (IPE). Each year student responsibilities in these plans should increase. Families should stay informed of options, activities and share their unique view of the youth's abilities and interests.



### WIOA requires all employees be paid fair wages

WIOA not only encourages people with disabilities to be employed in the community with people who do not have disabilities, it also addresses how much all employees are paid. **Sub-minimum** refers to wages paid an employee that are less than the minimum wage, federal, state or local under the Fair Labor Standards Act. Places where people with disabilities were paid sub-minimum wages were sometimes called “sheltered workshops”. In the past, some school districts had contracts with facilities to provide services or experiences where only people with disabilities worked. **Section 511 of WIOA** does not allow schools to contract for any sub-minimum wage position. A school may contract for employment services, like assessments or job coaching, but if pay is involved it must be at or above minimum wage. WIOA requires employers apply for and be awarded special permission from the government, called a 14c certificate, in order to pay sub-minimum wages. In addition to where and how a person will work, teams should clearly describe the wages to be earned with the student and family.

Find more transition-related information at

[www.transitioniowa.org](http://www.transitioniowa.org)



## WIOA Related Terms

The following are definitions of terms often used when talking about WIOA.

**Competitive integrated employment** is full-time or part-time work where an individual is paid minimum wage or more, and is eligible for the same benefits and advancement opportunities as employees without disabilities in similar positions. All of this takes place where the employee interacts with others who do not have disabilities. Employees with disabilities working at grocery stores or restaurants are examples of competitive integrated work. This is considered the best outcome under WIOA.

**Customized employment** personalizes employment for a job candidate and an employer in a way that meets the needs of both. It matches strengths, and interests of an employee to the conditions and needs of an employer. Customized employment includes Self-Employment, but can also be one of the following:

- **Job carving** modifies a job description containing one or more, but not all, of the tasks from the original.
- **Job sharing** is two or more people share the responsibilities of a job based on each other's strengths.
- **Task reassignment** takes job tasks being completed by a current employee and moves some of those responsibilities to a new employee. This allows the current employee to focus on other critical job functions, while a new job description is created to fulfill unmet workplace needs.

**Employment First (E1st)** is the belief that *everyone* can work. Iowa has adopted this viewpoint by putting competitive integrated employment as the desired outcome for ALL Iowans. Iowa is using the E1st concept to meet WIOA requirements. An E1st Guidebook is available for families interested in learning more; find it at [www.askresource.org/projects/transition](http://www.askresource.org/projects/transition).

**Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)** is a written plan, usually with Vocational Rehabilitation Services, outlining an individual's vocational goal, and the services to be provided to reach the goal. IPEs have a similar purpose for potential employees to what Individualized Education Plans (IEP) have for school aged students.

**Supported Employment** is an individualized service providing direct support, like a job coach, to a person who needs assistance completing work that uses their abilities and matches their interests in an integrated job setting. Under WIOA customized employment is included in the definition of supported employment.

## Resources

Find more employment information for youth, their families and professionals who serve them.

- Iowa Department for the Blind: <https://blind.iowa.gov>
- Iowa Department of Human Rights: <https://humanrights.iowa.gov>
- Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services: [www.ivrs.iowa.gov](http://www.ivrs.iowa.gov)
- Iowa Workforce Development: [www.iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov](http://www.iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov)

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