

Advancing Apprenticeship Opportunities for People with Disabilities

Registered Apprenticeship is a powerful tool for growing the American economy and training its workforce and is a proven method to help employers build diversity and inclusion in their workplaces. People with disabilities participate and succeed in Registered Apprenticeship programs at higher rates when they are provided with opportunities and support.¹ In 2023, 829 registered apprentices self-identified as individuals with a disability, a 750% increase over the past five years. Apprentices with disabilities are most often found working as electricians, construction craft laborers, pipe fitters, plumbers, and carpenters.²

The DOL's Office of Apprenticeship (OA), Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), and Office of Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) provide guidance, information, and best practices for people with disabilities, their families, employers, employment service providers, and state agencies. OA collaborates with ODEP and VETS to develop inclusive Registered Apprenticeship programs that appeal to a diverse pool of candidates, including veterans and people with disabilities, to meet employer needs. ODEP focuses on program and policy enhancements to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in Registered Apprenticeship. Meanwhile, VETS promotes pathways into apprenticeships for service members, veterans, disabled veterans, and, and military spouses and links employers with federal, state, and local resources to support veteran employment. For more information, please visit the [ODEP](#) and [VETS](#) websites.

ODEP created a new resource aimed at boosting the participation of people with disabilities in competitive integrated employment. Competitive integrated employment ensures that people with disabilities are paid competitive wages and work in environments where the majority of employees do not have disabilities. The [Competitive Integrated Employment Transformation Hub](#) brings together resources from across the federal government to provide practical guidance, policy information and evidence-based best practices for people with disabilities, their families, employers, employment service providers and state agencies.

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

Every day, individuals with disabilities work as apprentices in all sectors of the economy, and businesses seek opportunities to increase and diversify their workforces to tap into all available talent. The apprenticeship Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) regulations help individuals with disabilities succeed in Registered Apprenticeship programs and provide businesses and other sponsors the tools necessary to promote their inclusion. DOL's 2017 Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) in Apprenticeship Final Rule helps employers reduce barriers for people with disabilities and increase participation in and completion of Registered Apprenticeship programs. The 2017 EEO Final Rule bolstered existing EEO protections with the following key provisions:



- ▶ **Nondiscrimination and affirmative action:** Registered Apprenticeship programs may not discriminate against people with disabilities and the program facilities must provide reasonable accommodations. Sponsors with five or more apprentices must enforce affirmative action efforts to advance recruit, train, and retain a diverse workforce.
- ▶ **Self-identification:** Sponsors with five or more apprentices must present opportunities for individuals to self-identify as an individual with a disability if they choose to. Sponsors are also required to remind their apprentices that they may voluntarily update their disability status. For more information, please visit AskJan.org and see the [EARN Resource “Do Ask, Do Tell”](#).

- ▶ **Filing a complaint:** If an apprentice or an apprenticeship applicant believes they were discriminated against based on their disability, that individual may file a written complaint with the agency through which the apprenticeship program is registered. Sponsors must provide written notice to all applicants for apprenticeship and all apprentices of their right to file a discrimination complaint and the contact information and procedures for doing so.

The 2017 EEO Final Rule provides protections from discrimination, harassment, and reprisal, and provides apprentices and job seekers with avenues to assert these rights. If you feel you have been harassed during your apprenticeship or discriminated against during the hiring process, DOL has resources for you on our website.



THE PARTNERSHIP ON INCLUSIVE APPRENTICESHIP AND THE APPRENTICESHIP INCLUSION MODELS (AIM) DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

ODEP awarded a two-year, \$1.9 million AIM demonstration project through 2020 to

research, develop, test, and evaluate innovative approaches to expand inclusive occupational skills training and career pathways for people with disabilities in existing Registered Apprenticeship programs aimed at high-demand, high-wage industries, and occupations in existing Registered Apprenticeship programs to ensure equal participation.

The project produced a five-part policy and practice series and webinars that explored strategies for developing inclusive apprenticeship, modern youth apprenticeship, funding strategies, universal design, and how to foster program resilience during crises and other resources that can be found on [ODEP’s website](#).

Inclusive apprenticeship efforts continue through ODEP’s Center for Advancing Policy on Employment for Youth or CAPE-Youth, policy development, and technical assistance center. The Center works to improve employment outcomes for youth and young adults with disabilities by helping states build capacity in their youth service delivery and workforce systems to improve transition outcomes for youth and young adults with disabilities. For more information, visit [CAPE-Youth’s website](#).

¹ Registered Apprenticeship Programs: Improving the Pipeline for People With Disabilities <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/odep/pdf/apprenticeshipreport.pdf>

² ODEP dol.gov website: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/program-areas/apprenticeship>

Explore Registered Apprenticeship Today!

Want to learn more? Visit the U.S. Department of Labor’s one-stop source for all things apprenticeship: www.apprenticeship.gov or email us at apprenticeship@dol.gov.

