

# Advancing Apprenticeship Opportunities for People with Disabilities

**R**egistered Apprenticeship is a powerful tool for growing the American economy and training its workforce. It is also a proven method to help employers recruit people with unique strengths, experiences, and skills. People with disabilities participate and succeed in Registered Apprenticeship programs at higher rates when they are provided with opportunities and support.<sup>1</sup> In 2024, 8,040 or about 1% of active registered apprentices self-identified as people with a disability. This is a 25% increase over 2023 when 6,431 apprentices self-identified as such. Apprentices with disabilities most commonly work in the industries of construction, educational services, health care and social assistance, and public administration.<sup>2</sup>

The DOL's Office of Apprenticeship (OA), Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), and 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 broad 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, 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, people with disabilities work as apprentices in all sectors of the economy, and businesses seek opportunities to tap into all available talent. The apprenticeship Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) regulations help people 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 programs must provide reasonable accommodations. Sponsors with five or more apprentices must engage in affirmative action efforts to recruit, train, retain, and advance their workforce.
- ▶ **Self-identification:** Sponsors with five or more apprentices must present opportunities for apprentices to self-identify as a person with a disability if they choose to. Knowing the number of current apprentices with disabilities is a first step toward understanding whether impediments to employment exist and, if so, taking steps to increase the representation of qualified individuals with disabilities in RAPs. 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.”](#)

- ▶ **Process for filing a complaint:** If an apprentice or an apprenticeship applicant believes they were discriminated against based on their disability, that person 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.

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

[ODEP’s Partnership on Inclusive Apprenticeship](#) (PIA) project has focused on advancing policies and practices to increase access to career pathways for people with disabilities. Building on

lessons learned in the Apprenticeship Inclusion Model (AIM), the goal has been to promote inclusion in apprenticeships for both traditional areas and high-growth, high-demand fields. A primary focus over the years has been on key high-growth, high-demand fields that include information

technology, cybersecurity, healthcare, energy, and advanced manufacturing.

The Designing Inclusive Apprenticeships Guide helps support employers, other sponsors of apprenticeship programs, and their partners to recruit and train apprentices with disabilities. Other helpful resources include [Advancing Your Career through Apprenticeship and Disclosing Your Disability and Requesting an Accommodation](#) aimed to help apprentices to complete programs and achieve their career goals. .

Inclusive apprenticeship efforts also continue through ODEP’s technical assistance and policy development centers. ODEP’s [Center for Advancing Policy on Employment for Youth](#) (CAPE Youth), LEAD Center, and [Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion](#) (EARN) support this work. Learn more at ODEP’s [Apprenticeship webpage](#).

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

<sup>2</sup> 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](http://www.apprenticeship.gov) or email us at [apprenticeship@dol.gov](mailto:apprenticeship@dol.gov).

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