

CPCIDD Report Reveals Persistent Barriers to Employment for Californians with Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities

From policy to practice: obstacles and opportunities for inclusive employment in California

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[Report](#) Reveals Persistent Barriers to

Employment for Californians with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities



CA Policy Center

for Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities

—RESEARCH, POLICY AND ACTION—

The California Policy Center for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (CPCIDD) today released a new statewide report, Challenges and Barriers to Employment for People with

Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in California, offering a comprehensive examination of why competitive, integrated employment remains out of reach for many adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).



People with IDD want to work but the systems surrounding employment are often difficult to navigate. Our report provides a clear look at where those barriers exist & what can be done to reduce them.”

*Teresa Anderson, Executive
Director CPCIDD*

Funded by Ability Central, the report draws on eleven roundtable discussions and five in-depth interviews with employers, supported employment providers, regional center employment specialists, people with IDD, and family members. The findings highlight systemic, structural, and informational barriers that continue to limit access to meaningful work—despite California’s decade-old Employment First policy.

“People with IDD want to work,” said Teresa Anderson, Executive Director of CPCIDD. “But the systems surrounding employment—transportation, benefits, service structures, and workforce capacity—are often misaligned or difficult to navigate. This report provides a clear look at where those barriers exist and what can be done to reduce them.”

“The CPCIDD Employment Report makes clear that employment disparities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are not the result of individual limitations, but of systemic barriers that can and must be addressed through informed policy, coordinated investment, and shared accountability,” said Griffen Stapp, Executive Director of Ability Central.

Key Findings

The report identifies several recurring challenges across stakeholder groups, including:

- Low employment rates for adults with IDD, which have remained between 12.4% and 17.2% over the past 15 years.
- Employer uncertainty about reasonable accommodations, liability, and the role of job coaches.
- Inconsistent job coaching quality and workforce shortages that limit access to skilled employment support.
- Transportation barriers, especially for individuals who rely on paratransit or work nontraditional hours.
- Fear of losing essential benefits, including SSI, SSDI, Medi-Cal, and IHSS, which often discourages individuals from pursuing more hours or new opportunities.
- Regulatory and rate-related constraints that limit provider flexibility and the availability of specialized employment supports.

Opportunities for System Improvement

The report outlines several policy-informed opportunities to strengthen employment pathways.

“This research reinforces what we hear across our employment work, including our IDD employment podcast series,” Anderson added. “When systems are aligned and employers are supported, people with IDD thrive in the workplace. Our goal is to provide objective, actionable information that helps California move closer to that reality.”

About the Report

Title: Challenges and Barriers to Employment for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in California

Publisher: California Policy Center for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (CPCIDD)

Publication Date: December 2025

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The full report is available at https://www.cpcidd.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/EmploymentReportAugust2025_Print-Copy_FINAL.pdf

About CPCIDD

The California Policy Center for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (CPCIDD) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit policy center dedicated to conducting objective, evidence-based research and policy analysis on issues affecting Californians with intellectual and developmental disabilities. CPCIDD does not provide direct services or engage in advocacy; instead, we produce research and recommendations that inform decision-makers, community partners, and the broader public.

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