



Industry Analysis and Pathways to Career Success for Persons with Disabilities



Introduction

The Able Trust, also known as the Florida Endowment Foundation for Vocational Rehabilitation, is a 501(c)(3) public charity established by the Florida Legislature in 1990 as a direct support organization for the Florida Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (FLDOE/VR). Through their support of FLDOE/VR, The Able Trust collaborates with Florida employers, community organizations, and career development partners to help Floridians with disabilities of all ages enter the workforce.

The current workforce and employment landscape has created unique opportunities to expand employment among people with disabilities (PWDs). Recent moves towards remote and flexible work arrangements are broadly beneficial and especially so for some PWDs, as they have long sought a range of accommodations and assistive technologies to enable greater accessibility. As accommodations that enhance accessibility and productivity become more widespread across all workers, uptake among PWDs will follow suit.

While a burgeoning openness to new work arrangements may be a boon for current and aspiring workers with disabilities, there is no shortage of challenges to overcome. The labor force participation rate for PWDs has remained stubbornly low for the last several decades. Mechanisms to attract, prepare, place, and onboard PWDs are disappointingly underdeveloped. PWDs and their families struggle to identify and access services that can promote and unlock viable career opportunities and enable employability. Policies designed to ensure basic living expenses for PWDs continue to disincentivize work. At the same time, the state of Florida is engaged in work to enhance workforce development services, and FLDOE/VR, with the support of The Able Trust, is well positioned to promote PWDs as a key source of talent who can ameliorate talent shortages and align the state's service delivery network to meet the needs of employers.

It should be noted that PWDs represent every facet of Florida's population. As well, within the broader population of PWDs, the type of disability varies widely, as does the severity, age and cause of onset.

This report, undertaken by Lightcast and commissioned by The Able Trust, does not aim to catalog all of the unique experiences felt by PWD in the workforce, but it does aim to highlight how employment of PWDs (and



associated challenges) manifests across the state of Florida. The report offers observations that can be used to address those challenges and opportunities while remaining cognizant of the unique context of the state and of its people. The report also explores various issues within existing efforts to maximize employment and economic opportunity for Floridians with disabilities. By examining macro-economic data, stakeholder perspectives, and practice examples from other states, this research aims to provide practical insights into the challenges and opportunities that (a) PWDs face in gaining employment and economic mobility, (b) employers face in engaging and accommodating underutilized talent pools, (c) service providers face in supporting PWDs and their families. Together, these perspectives are a valuable resource for cultivating Florida's vocational rehabilitation system in a manner that optimizes benefits to stakeholders, and in turn advances economic health across Florida.



Methodology

The research for this report consisted of the following:

- **Literature Review.** More than 100 national and regional studies were reviewed to identify resources, challenges, opportunities, and best practices related to employment of PWDs.
- **Macro-Economic Research.** The 2021 1-year and 2015-2019 5-year American Community Survey (ACS) microdata samples from IPUMS USA were used to analyze the employment outcomes of working-age adults (ages 25 to 64) by disability status and type. The following geographies were included in the analysis:
 - The United States
 - The state of Florida and peer states
 - Substate regions in Florida
 - Rural and urban areas
 - FLDOE/VR areas

The 2021 ACS 1-year estimates – the most recent data available from IPUMS USA – were used where possible, but as per guidance issued by US Census Bureau, the 2015-2019 ACS 5-year estimates were used to compare outcomes at the occupation and industry level.¹

- **Comparison State Research.** The Able Trust identified California, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Texas as states with effective services in support of employment for PWDs. Data from the ACS, Lightcast’s job posting database, and other sources were used to draw comparisons between Florida and the four comparison states regarding overall employment data for PWDs in those states. Additionally, the literature review revealed those states’ practices and resources that Florida may choose to emulate, replicate, and otherwise apply within the unique context of Florida.
- **Stakeholder Interviews.** The Able Trust and the research team convened PWDs and their families, employers, and agencies providing



¹ The US Census Bureau recommends using the 5-year ACS microdata for the best precision and most reliable estimates, particularly when analyzing smaller populations, such as detailed occupation groupings at the subnational level. Because of data collection delays, issues with sampling the population of people with disabilities, and quality control issues with the 2020 Census, this report uses the 2015-2019 ACS 5-year estimates for a historical benchmark and the 2021 ACS 1-year sample for an actualized addendum where sample sizes allow.

employment and other services for listening sessions across the state and virtually. In total more than 60 people across these stakeholder groups provided input and perspective via these sessions

- **Survey.** The research team distributed surveys to each of the stakeholder groups identified above, garnering more than 500 responses.

This study defines Disability as per the ACS, which classifies disabilities in 6 categories:

1. Ambulatory Difficulty - Serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs.
2. Cognitive Difficulty - Serious difficulty remembering, concentrating, or making decisions.
3. Hearing Difficulty - Deaf or serious difficulty hearing.
4. Vision Difficulty - Blind or serious difficulty seeing, even with corrective lenses.
5. Self-Care Difficulty - Serious difficulty bathing or dressing.
6. Independent Living Difficulty - Serious difficulty performing basic activities outside the home.

Each person experiences their disability in unique ways, and each employer and service provider must be sensitive to the personal nature of disability and its implications for preparing for, engaging in, and succeeding at work. This report recognizes the importance of these unique experiences and aims to provide some broad perspective by disaggregating statistics by disability type.



Employment Landscape for People with Disabilities in Florida

Initiatives to improve access to employment opportunities and workplace accommodations for PWDs have contributed to steady growth in their labor force participation and employment in recent years. However, the gap in labor force participation for PWDs compared to the general population remains high at 38 percentage points as of 2021. Closing the labor force participation gap for Floridians with disabilities would benefit not only the workers, but also employers who have been struggling to address ongoing labor shortages. In addition to bringing many more people into the workforce, increasing labor force participation among PWDs by 10 percentage points over the next ten years would add an estimated \$111 billion to the Florida economy, and \$1.08 billion to state tax revenues.²

Through interviews and focus groups, employers reported a desire to engage a wider talent pool and an openness to intentionally engaging PWDs as a potential target population. To do so, it will be important to increase employers' awareness of the relevant supports, programs, and assistance available to them. Most businesses reported that they had not worked with the Vocational Rehabilitation programs or the service providers within the network. Employers also expressed some unease with whether or how to ask applicants about their disabilities, about whether to encourage or invite self-disclosure, and how best to do so. Employers welcomed training and support for how they can best reach out to, engage, accommodate, and support PWDs throughout the recruitment, application, interview, hiring and onboarding experiences.

Developing an approach to increase labor force participation among PWDs requires first taking stock of the current employment landscape for PWDs in Florida. To this end, the following sections supply an overview of key employment outcomes and identifies areas of need and opportunity where partners across the state can focus and strategically employ investments and resources.

² Read the full report here: <https://www.abletrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/The-Able-Trust-Economic-Impact-Report.pdf>

Important Considerations for Data Related to People with Disabilities

Measuring Disability

Rather than directly asking respondents if they have a disability, surveys like the ACS use proxy questions to generate population estimates. It is important to note that such techniques can lead to under-counting PWDs. A recent study found that the six questions used by the ACS to assess disability underestimated prevalence by approximately 20%. Disability prevalence was most often underestimated for the population with mental health related disabilities.³

Population Parameters

The population included in a survey sample can have a significant impact on Disability estimates and findings. For example, our analysis of ACS data for the working-age population shows prevalence rates of 11%, but CDC estimates show that 1 in 4 adults (ages 18 and up) have a disability.

Self-Reporting

The accuracy of disability data is dependent on the questions asked and respondents' willingness to voluntarily disclose disabilities. Further, studies have linked underreporting of disability status to a general reluctance to self-disclose disabilities. This is particularly true for people with highly stigmatized disabilities, such as mental illnesses.⁴

Visible and Invisible Disabilities

Not all disabilities are apparent and easily observed by others. People with invisible disabilities - such as mental illnesses and chronic diseases - may be less inclined to disclose their disability, whether in workplace settings or in a government survey. This can make it difficult for PWDs to ask for or receive the accommodation necessary for them to succeed.

3 Comparing Measures of Functional Difficulty With Self-Identified Disability: Implications For Health Policy, Jean P. Hall, Noelle K. Kurth, Catherine Ipsen, Andrew Myers, and Kelsey Goddard, Health Affairs 2022 41:10, 1433-1441

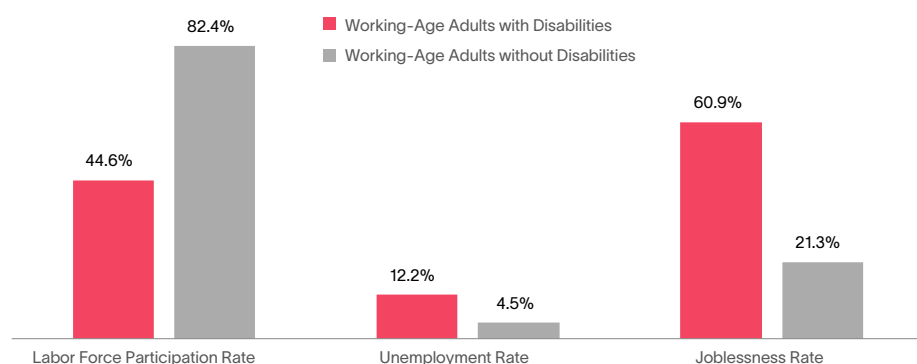
4 Ibid.

Labor Force Participation, Unemployment, and Joblessness

Labor force participation rate, unemployment rate, and joblessness rate are key indicators for understanding the economic situation of PWDs in Florida. We compare these outcomes for working-age adults with disabilities to working-age adults not reporting a disability.

The labor force participation rate reflects the percentage of civilian noninstitutionalized working-age population that is employed or actively looking for work. In 2021, there were approximately 11 million working age adults in Florida, of which an estimated 1.2 million had one or more disabilities. Yet, despite making up 11% of the state's working age population, PWDs only accounted for 6% of those participating in the labor force. As shown in Figure 1 below, the labor force participation rate for working-age adults with disabilities in Florida is nearly 44 percentage points lower than the rate for those without disabilities.

Figure 1: Labor Force Participation, Unemployment, and Joblessness Rates for Working-Age Adults with and without Disabilities in Florida, 2021



Source: Lightcast analysis of 2021 ACS 1-year estimates from IPUMS USA.

The unemployment rate is the number of people not working but actively looking for work expressed as a percentage of the labor force (the labor force is the sum of the employed and unemployed). In 2021, the unemployment rate was just under eight percentage points higher for working age-adults with disabilities compared to those without disabilities.

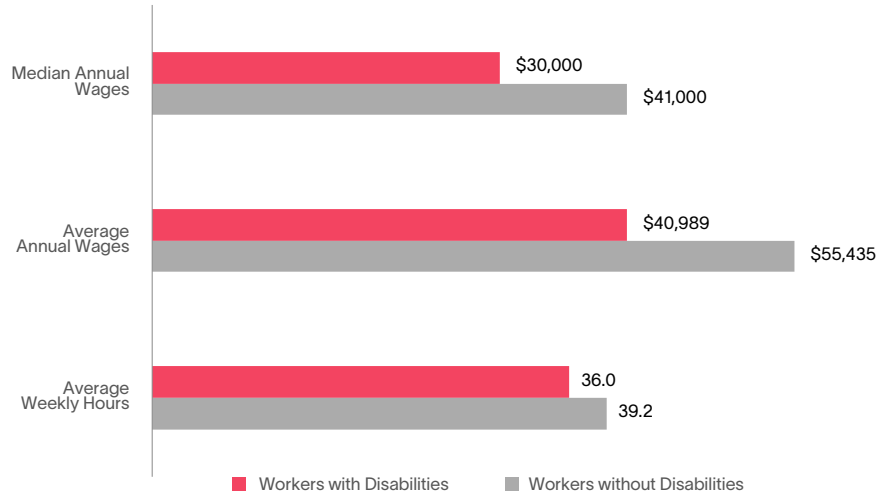
The joblessness rate is the percentage of working-age adults who are not working, regardless of job-seeking status (i.e., not in labor force or unemployed). Because it disregards job-seeking status, the joblessness rate can often serve as an even better indicator of underemployment than the unemployment rate. For example, workers with disabilities who become discouraged and stop looking for work qualify as jobless, but these individuals are not included in unemployment calculations since they have given up the job search. The estimated joblessness rate for working-age adults with disabilities in Florida in 2021 was 60.9% compared to 21.3% for those without disabilities, a difference of 39.6 percentage points. This means that working-age adults with disabilities are nearly six times as likely to be jobless as working-age adults without disabilities.



Earnings

To identify disparities among employed working-age adults in Florida, we examined differences in median and average annual wages, as well as average weekly hours worked for the aggregate populations.⁵ Figure 2 below shows these estimates.

Figure 2: Median and Average Annual Wages and Average Weekly Hours for Employed Working-Age Adults with and without Disabilities in Florida, 2021



Source: Lightcast analysis of 2021 ACS 1-year estimates from IPUMS USA.

Our analysis found that the median annual income for employed working-age adults with disabilities in Florida in 2021 was \$30,000 and approximately \$11,000 less than the median annual income for the working-age population without disabilities. Comparing median wages can erase differences among high earners, so this report also considers the difference in average wages. A comparison of estimated average annual wages suggests an earnings premium of nearly \$14,500 for workers without disabilities. Similar trends exist nationwide.

Although our methodology for wage estimates was designed to remove biases stemming from average hours worked, it is important to recognize that across all occupations and industries, working-age adults without a disability in Florida work an average of 3.2 hours more than PWDs per week, totals just over 165 hours per year. For workers earning the state's average hourly wage of \$25, this difference in average weekly hours equates to an estimated \$4,150 in lost earnings per year. Additionally, 29% of employed Floridians with disabilities in 2021 reported working part-time compared to just 19% of those without disabilities. With part-time and seasonal workers less likely to receive promotions and more likely to be low-wage workers, these trends explain, in

⁵ In contrast to many studies that estimate wages for PWDs, we took additional steps to ensure our analysis provides the most accurate estimates possible for the target populations. Although the ACS reports annual wages for respondents, these estimates cannot be compared without assuming that all members of the population are full-time employees working year-round. We address this limitation by using individual responses for average weeks and hours worked to get average hourly wages for each member of the sample. Then, the new hourly wage estimates were used to calculate comparable average annual and median wages.

part, the difference in average and median wages for workers with and without disabilities.

Increasing the rate at which PWDs in Florida secure full-time employment would not only help reduce the disability earnings gap but also increase access to employer sponsored health plans and retirement plans. People with disabilities may not aspire to the same types of jobs or the same level of workforce participation as those without disabilities, and the nature and severity of some disabilities likely impacts the ability to do some work. Nonetheless, higher earnings are rarely perceived or experienced negatively and the identification of these disparities can give those serving PWDs a benchmark for improvement, if not complete erasure of the current wage premium afforded to workers without disabilities.

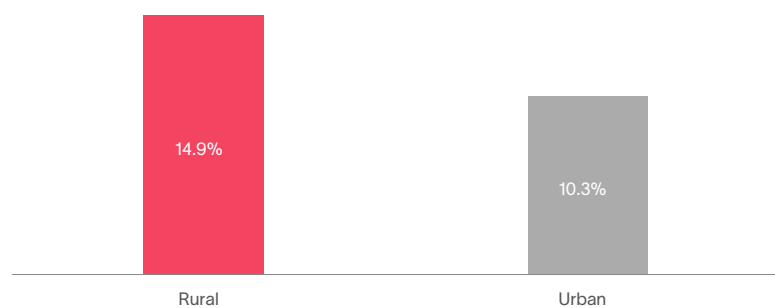
Substate Employment of Floridians with Disabilities

The employment landscape for PWDs is unique across Florida's diverse economic and geographical regions. Workforce development initiatives and support services will be most effective when strategically tailored to meet the needs of each region. To support informed decision-making, we compared employment outcomes for working-age adults with and without disabilities for the state's rural/urban areas and its seven FLDOE/VR regions.⁶

Rural-Urban Disparities

As shown in Figures 3 and 4 below, an estimated 15% of the working-age adult population living in rural Florida (not in a Florida MSA) has a disability, compared to only 10% of the population living in an urban area (within a Florida MSA). Broken down by disability type, prevalence rates are consistently higher for working-age adults living in rural areas. Our analysis found that ambulatory and cognitive disabilities were 2.2 percentage points more prevalent in rural areas than in urban areas.

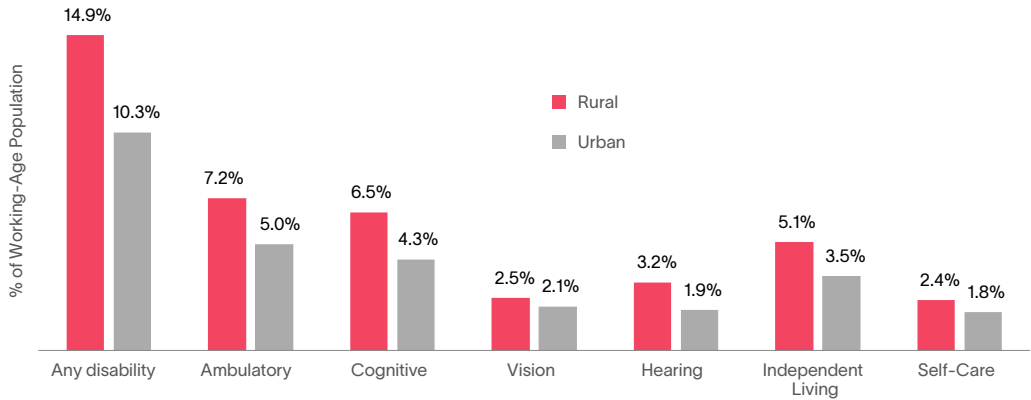
Figure 3: Disability Prevalence Among Working-Age Floridians by Rural/Urban Status, 2021



Source: Lightcast Analysis of 2021 ACS 1-year estimates from IPUMS USA.

⁶ The report defines the rural population as all people living outside of a Florida MSA. The ACS does not report data for VR regions, so we produced estimates by assigning a VR region to each Florida PUMA. It must be noted that the estimates for VR Regions have a relatively small n, and greater fluctuations across regions may be attributable to sample size. A detailed map of the Florida Department of Education Vocational Rehabilitation regions can be found in the Appendix.

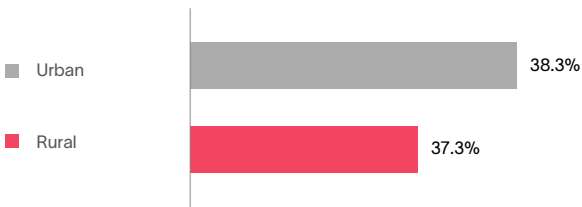
Figure 4: Disability Prevalence Among Working-Age Floridians by Disability Type and Rural/Urban Status, 2021



Source: Lightcast analysis of 2021 ACS 1-year microdata from IPUMS USA

Our analysis found that there is a sizable difference in labor force participation among working-age adults with disabilities across urban and rural contexts. The labor force participation rates for rural working-age adults with disabilities in Florida lags that of their urban peers by nearly 5 percentage points.

Figure 5: Labor Force Participation Rate Among Working-Age Floridians with Disabilities by Rural/Urban Status, 2021



Source: Lightcast Analysis of 2021 ACS 1-year data from IPUMS USA.

Among rural working-age adults, people without disabilities are more than three times as likely as PWDs to be employed. In urban areas, PWDs are approximately 2.8 times less likely than people without disabilities to be employed. However, comparing employment for working-age adults with disabilities in urban and rural regions, our analysis found that relative to population sizes, PWDs living in urban areas are only slightly more likely to be working than those living in rural Florida.

The need for inclusive workforce services for PWDs is acute in Florida’s rural areas. Although the total number of working-age adults with a disability is greater in urban areas, those living in rural areas face a higher prevalence of disabilities and a lower labor force participation rate.

VR Regions

Disability prevalence rates vary significantly across the seven FLDOE/VR Areas.

Working-age Floridians with disabilities are highly concentrated in Areas 1 and 2. The two areas combined are home to 22% of working-age Floridians but 28% of those with disabilities. Areas 1 and 2 also have the highest disability prevalence rates, at 15% and 13%, respectively. The relative concentration of PWDs in these areas is unsurprising, as they cover the Florida Panhandle and by extension, much of the state's rural population.

Apart from Area 7, the labor force participation rate gap for PWDs is consistent across the seven FLDOE/VR Areas. As depicted in Figure 6 below, there is little difference in labor force participation among working-age adults without disabilities across the areas, but when looking at the population with disabilities, those living in Area 7 are much more likely to participate in the labor force. In Area 4, there is a 41-percentage point labor force participation rate gap for PWDs, the highest of all the FLDOE/VR Areas.

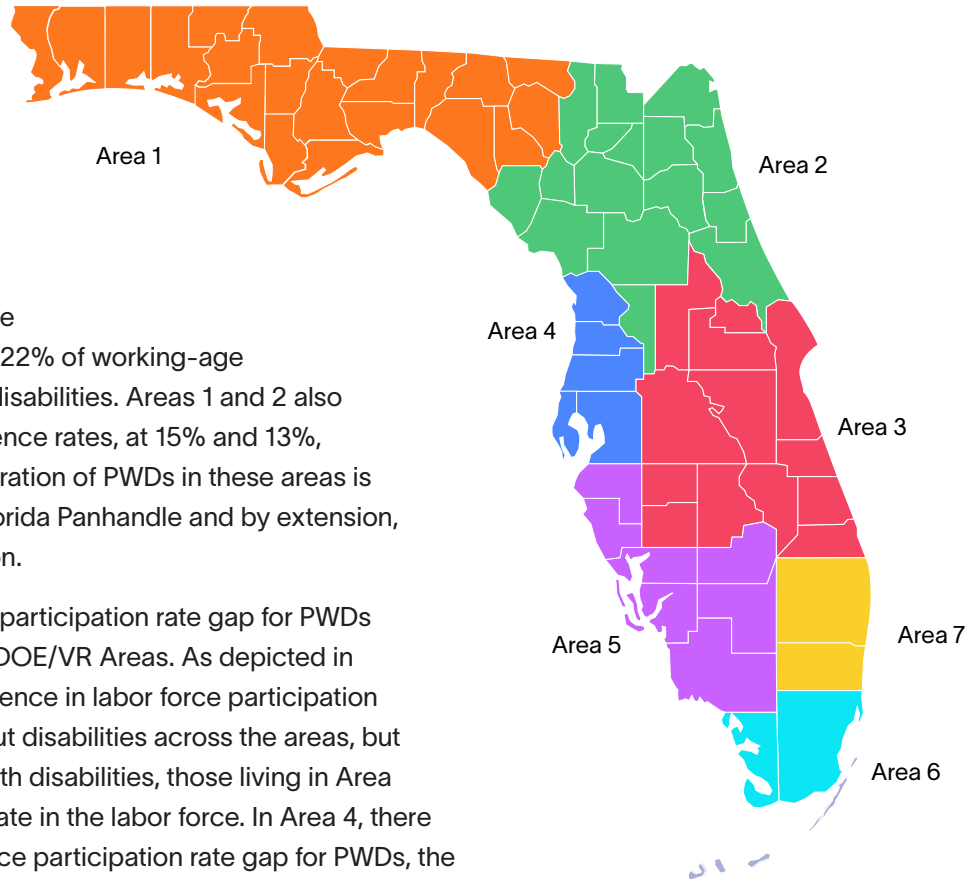
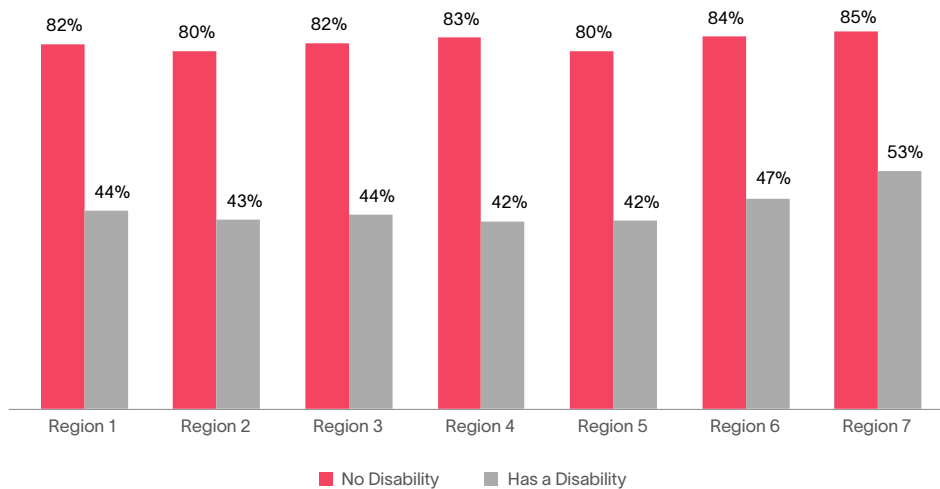


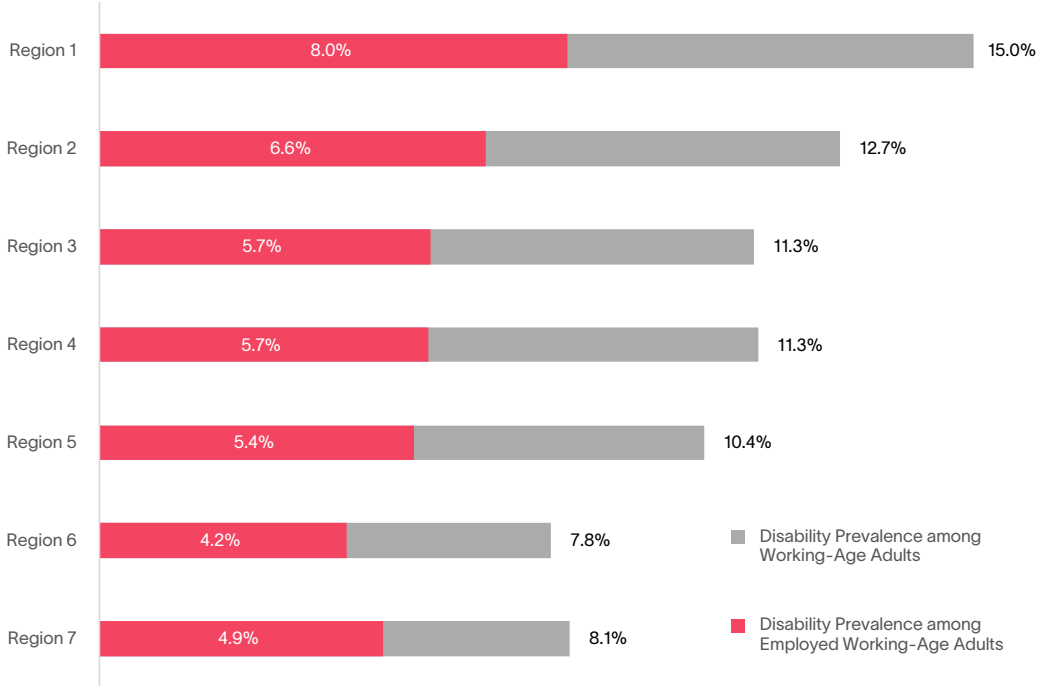
Figure 6: Labor Force Participation Rate for Working-Age Floridians with and without Disabilities by FLDOE/VR Region, 2021



Source: Lightcast analysis of 2021 ACS 1-year estimates from IPUMS USA

Figure 7 below visualizes the disproportionate representation of PWDs in the overall and employed working-age adult populations across the seven FLDOE/VR Regions. Region 6, which includes the highly urban Miami-Dade and Monroe counties, has the lowest disability prevalence rates for the overall and employed working-age adult populations, with PWDs accounting for 7.8% of the region's working age adults and 4.2% of those who are employed. Regions 1 and 2 have the greatest disparities between the percent of working-age adults with disabilities and the percent of the employed population with disabilities, at 6-7 percentage points.

Figure 7: Comparison of Disability Prevalence Among the Overall and Employed Working Age Adult Populations by FLDOE/VR Region, 2021



Source: Lightcast analysis of 2021 ACS 1-year estimates from IPUMS USA

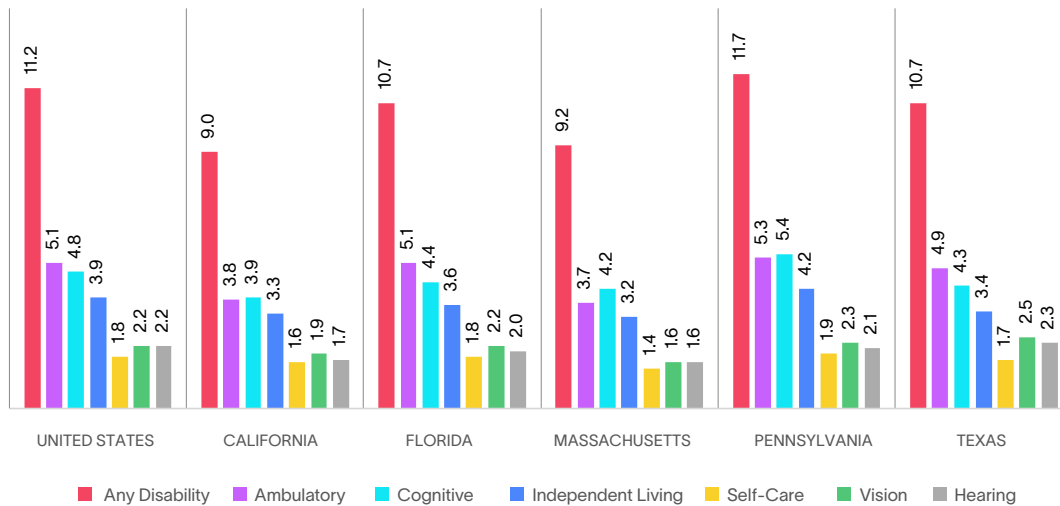
Comparison Regions

To better understand labor market outcomes for PWDs in Florida, it helps to compare against other states. The Able Trust identified California, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Texas whose population and employment outcomes can serve as a benchmark for Florida and enable Florida's network of providers to consider how to target occupations and industries for outreach, engagement, and workforce development investments.

Disability Prevalence Rates

Before comparing employment outcomes, we considered the similarity of disability prevalence rates for the working age population in the selected geographical regions. The prevalence of disability among working age adults in Florida is on par with Texas, Pennsylvania, and the national average, but lower than in Massachusetts and California.

Figure 8: Disability Prevalence Rates by Disability Type for Benchmark Regions, 2021



Source: Lightcast analysis of 2021 ACS 1-year estimates from IPUMS USA

Key Employment Outcomes

We found disparate employment outcomes for PWDs in all benchmark states. Yet, comparatively, peer states outperformed Florida on nearly all selected indicators: labor force participation, unemployment, and joblessness.⁷

⁷ As referenced earlier, the **labor force participation rate** is the percentage of the civilian noninstitutional working-age population that is working or actively looking for work. The **unemployment rate** represents the number of people not working but actively looking for work as a percentage of the labor force (the labor force is the sum of the employed and unemployed). **Jobless** people are working-age adults who are not working, regardless of job-seeking status (i.e., not in labor force or unemployed)

Figure 9: Key Employment Outcomes for Working Age Adults with Disabilities by Benchmark Region, 2021Source: Lightcast analysis of 2021 ACS 1-year estimates from IPUMS USA

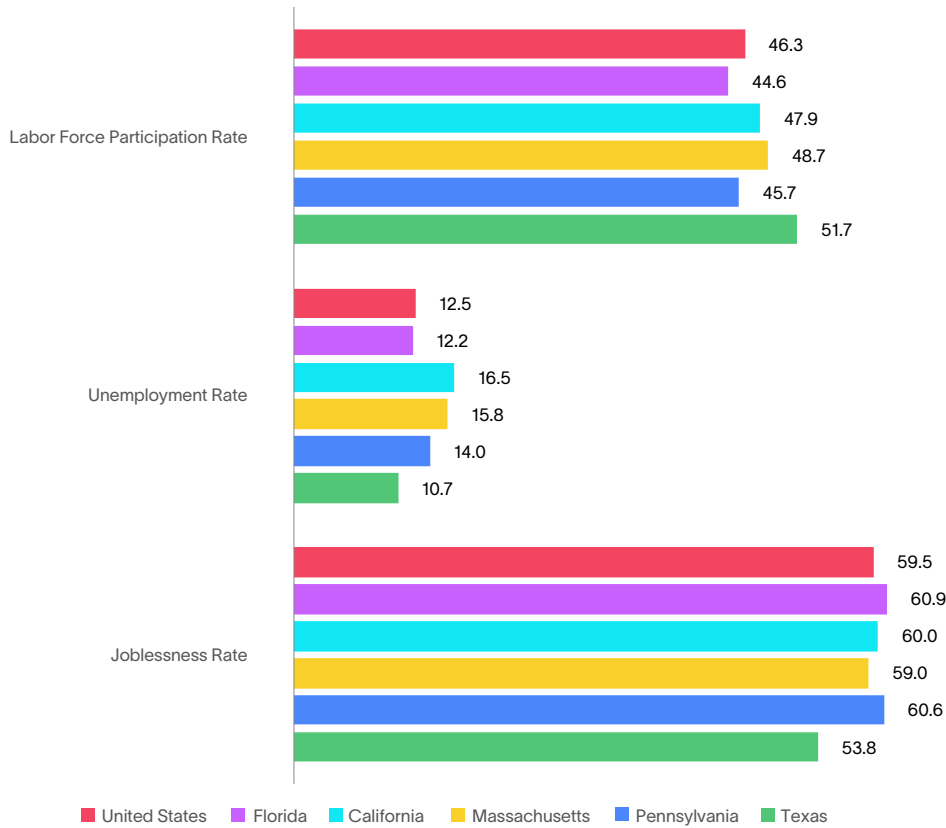


Figure 9 above shows labor force participation, unemployment, and joblessness rates in Florida, comparison states, and the US overall. Labor force participation for PWDs in Florida lags that of peers. Our analysis found that PWDs are unemployed at a higher rate in California, but they are less likely to participate in the labor force and more likely to be experiencing joblessness in Florida.

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It is possible that higher rates of joblessness among working age PWDs are due to more PWDs in Florida being unwilling or unable to work due to the severity of their disabilities, which is not captured by the ACS disability measures. More frequent joblessness may also be indicative of PWDs in Florida experiencing more pervasive long-term unemployment, leading to discouraged workers dropping out of the labor force or passively seeking work. We investigate this further with data collected during our engagements with PWDs.

Our analysis suggests that PWDs in peer geographical regions generally experience greater success securing employment. This should not be seen as discouraging but rather as evidence that peer regions can be a source of best practices and strategies to engage and support PWDs in the workforce.

Industry and Occupation Dynamics for People with Disabilities in Florida

Understanding the industry and occupation mix for PWDs assists job placement, career pathing, outreach, employer engagement, and targeted job training. This section discusses the occupation and industry dynamics of PWDs in Florida and peer regions.

Industry Mix

Workers with disabilities in Florida are highly concentrated in the Health Care and Social Assistance and Retail Trade industries. Although Lightcast projects growth within the Health Care and Social Science industry, Retail Trade job openings are expected to decline by 2% in Florida over the next decade.

Massachusetts aside, Florida employs a greater share of PWDs in Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services. This sector is expected to grow faster than average and employs many higher-wage occupations. Florida also employs a greater share of PWDs in Accommodation and Food Services in which growth is expected to be much faster than average for the region. Employment in a growing sector means that the risk of job loss is lower. At the same time, special attention should be paid to earnings and career advancement opportunities for workers with disabilities in Accommodation and Food Services since this sector tends to perform worse along these metrics than other industries. The concentration of PWDs in this sector should not limit the labor market outcomes earned by this cohort.

The share of workers with disabilities in Florida employed in the manufacturing sector (5.7%) is significantly less than that at the national level (10.9%). Similarly, all peer states reviewed had a much greater share of workers with disabilities employed in manufacturing. Manufacturing jobs are expected to grow, and the industry is seeking to fill jobs that became available during the pandemic, creating opportunities for workers with and without disabilities.



Table 1: Industry Distribution of Workforce with Disabilities by State, 2021

Industry (2-Digit NAICS)	Florida		California		Massachusetts		Pennsylvania		Texas		United States	
	Rank	% of Workforce with Disabilities	Rank	% of Workforce with Disabilities	Rank	% of Workforce with Disabilities	Rank	% of Workforce with Disabilities	Rank	% of Workforce with Disabilities	Rank	% of Workforce with Disabilities
Retail Trade	1	13.9%	2	10.9%	2	10.7%	2	12.1%	2	11.9%	2	12.3%
Health Care and Social Assistance	2	12.5%	1	15.4%	1	20.5%	1	19.7%	1	13.9%	1	15.7%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	3	7.9%	4	7.8%	4	8.4%	7	5.4%	7	6.4%	5	6.4%
Accommodation and Food Services	4	7.6%	8	5.4%	9	4.7%	4	5.8%	8	5.9%	6	6.0%
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	5	7.6%	6	6.1%	11	4.0%	11	4.1%	10	5.5%	9	5.2%
Construction	6	7.6%	5	7.2%	6	5.5%	5	5.6%	4	8.0%	4	7.0%
Transportation and Warehousing	7	6.0%	9	5.4%	10	4.0%	8	5.1%	6	6.4%	7	5.8%
Manufacturing	8	5.7%	3	8.7%	3	10.3%	3	11.7%	3	9.1%	3	10.9%
Other Services (Except Public Administration)	9	4.9%	7	5.7%	7	5.1%	9	4.7%	9	5.8%	10	5.0%
Educational Services	10	4.8%	10	5.4%	5	6.2%	6	5.5%	5	6.6%	8	5.5%
Finance and Insurance	11	4.4%	15	2.2%	8	4.7%	10	4.3%	11	3.8%	12	3.6%
Active-Duty Military	12	3.6%	12	3.6%	12	3.2%	13	2.6%	12	3.4%	11	3.6%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	13	2.8%	18	1.9%	17	1.8%	18	1.2%	15	2.0%	15	1.9%
Public Administration	14	2.6%	11	4.1%	13	2.5%	15	2.1%	13	3.1%	13	3.0%
Wholesale Trade	15	2.3%	14	2.4%	16	2.0%	12	3.5%	14	2.2%	14	2.1%
Information	16	2.2%	13	2.6%	15	1.7%	14	2.6%	16	1.7%	16	1.8%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	17	2.0%	16	2.1%	14	1.2%	16	1.7%	17	1.2%	17	1.7%
Utilities	18	0.9%	19	0.8%	18	1.1%	17	1.3%	19	1.1%	19	0.9%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	19	0.6%	17	2.0%	19	0.8%	19	0.8%	20	0.8%	18	1.2%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	20	0.2%	21	0.1%	20	0.2%	21	0.0%	21	0.2%	21	0.1%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	21	0.0%	20	0.2%	21	1.1%	20	0.3%	18	1.1%	20	0.4%

Source: Lightcast analysis of 2021 ACS 1-year estimates from IPUMS USA

Growing Industries

Several of Florida’s industries are projected to grow at a rapid pace over the next decade. Most of the sectors experiencing the most rapid growth do not employ large shares of PWDs. Those rapidly growing industries represent expanded sets of opportunities for all Floridians, and industry partners can be approached to look to PWDs as an important source of talent. Table 2 below shows the current industry distribution of Florida’s workforce with disabilities for the industries with the fastest projected growth rates.

Table 2: Current Industry Distribution of Florida’s Workforce with Disabilities for Florida’s Fastest Growing Sectors

Industry (2-Digit NAICS)	Projected Growth*	2022 Jobs	2032 Jobs, Projected	% of Workforce with Disabilities in Florida
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	39.7%	216,369	302,310	2.0%
Accommodation and Food Services	29.4%	947,214	1,225,671	7.6%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	18.3%	3,883	4,593	0.0%
Educational Services	17.1%	205,445	240,564	4.8%
Transportation and Warehousing	15.7%	391,294	452,693	6.0%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	15.4%	682,255	787,208	7.9%
Health Care and Social Assistance	13.9%	1,200,256	1,367,306	12.5%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	12.7%	453,326	510,757	4.9%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	12.0%	97,127	108,785	0.6%

Source: Lightcast growth projections and analysis of 2021 ACS 1-year estimates from IPUMS USA

Occupation Mix

Across all industries, the representation of workers with disabilities varies by occupation. Several occupations – Office and Administrative Support, Sales, Management, Building and Grounds Maintenance, Food Preparation, and others – have greater representation of workers with disabilities in Florida than is observed at the national level. Conversely, workers with disabilities in Florida are less represented than their peers across the US in occupations like Transportation and Materials Moving, Production, and Healthcare Support.

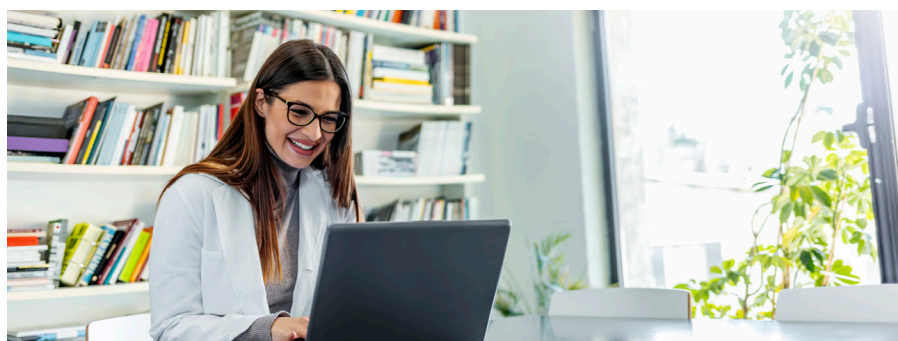


Table 3: Comparison of Occupation Family Distribution of Workforce with Disabilities in Florida and Nationwide, 2021

Occupation Family 2-digit SOC)	Florida		United States	
	Workers with Disabilities	% of Workforce with Disabilities	Workers with Disabilities	% of Workforce with Disabilities
Office and Administrative Support	68,024	14.7%	950,376	12.3%
Sales and Related	49,578	10.7%	729,961	9.4%
Management	47,973	10.4%	659,548	8.5%
Transportation and Material Moving	38,934	8.4%	710,517	9.2%
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	28,453	6.2%	373,046	4.8%
Food Preparation and Serving Related	25,689	5.6%	388,016	5.0%
Construction and Extraction	23,485	5.1%	377,796	4.9%
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	22,788	4.9%	392,579	5.1%
Educational Instruction and Library	22,704	4.9%	374,028	4.8%
Business and Financial Operations	20,340	4.4%	410,483	5.3%
Production	16,411	3.6%	256,096	3.3%
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	16,052	3.5%	523,827	6.8%
Healthcare Support	14,625	3.2%	288,863	3.7%
Personal Care and Service	13,701	3.0%	341,683	4.4%
Protective Service Occupations	10,754	2.3%	182,732	2.4%
Computer and Mathematical	10,200	2.2%	173,099	2.2%
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	7,774	1.7%	148,765	1.9%
Community and Social Service	7,035	1.5%	130,032	1.7%
Architecture and Engineering	6,995	1.5%	127,063	1.6%
Legal	4,706	1.0%	70,998	0.9%
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	2,664	0.6%	60,591	0.8%
Life, Physical, and Social Science	1,254	0.3%	20,605	0.3%

Source: Lightcast analysis of 2021 ACS 1-year estimates from IPUMS USA

Workers with disabilities in Florida are concentrated in occupation families in which Lightcast projects growth will be significantly slower than the average rate of 10.4%. The two largest Occupation families employing PWDs are also the two with the slowest projected growth rates. While PWDs have clearly experienced success finding employment in the Sales and Related and Office and Administrative Support Occupation families, those with growth rates faster than average will be struggling to find talent to meet their workforce needs. This will create new opportunities for PWDs to enter the labor market or to move into occupations that workers with a disability

have historically been underrepresented in, such as Personal Care and Service, Healthcare Support, and Management Occupations.

Occupations by Disability Type

While The Able Trust and the support and service systems in Florida are dedicated to addressing the needs of the broader population with disabilities, Floridians (as elsewhere) experience disability in a number of ways, and any individual's specific disability will have a different impact on the types of work that they seek and are able to do, the types of workplace accommodations (if needed) available, and employers' perceptions (right or wrong) about whether a person with a given disability will be able to meet job expectations.

Table 4 below shows the representation of people in Florida with the major disability types within the top occupation families. These estimates were calculated using the ACS 5-year microdata for 2015-2019 to ensure the reliability of findings, given that population sizes are relatively small when grouped by occupation and disability type. Our analysis found that workers with sensory and ambulatory disabilities have the highest rates of employment within Management occupations, whereas those with independent and self-care disabilities are more concentrated in Production occupations.

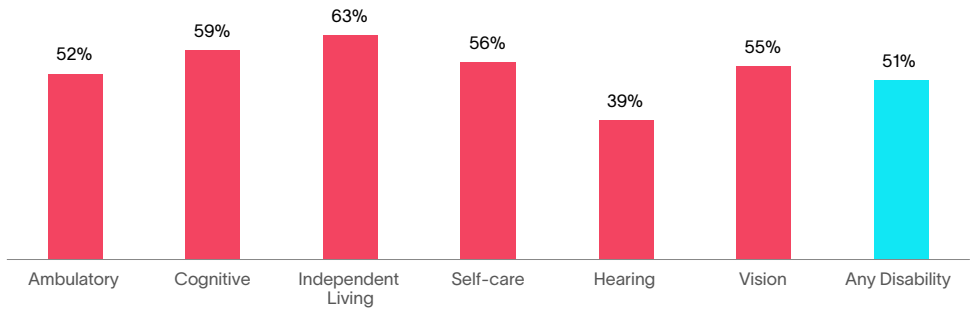
Table 4: Occupation Family Distribution of Workforce with Disabilities in Florida by Disability Type, 2015-2019

Occupation	AMBULATORY	COGNITIVE	INDEPENDENT LIVING	SELF-CARE	HEARING	VISION
	% with Disability Rank	% with Disability Rank	% with Disability Rank	% with Disability Rank	% with Disability Rank	% with Disability Rank
Office and Administrative Support	11%	9%	10%	9%	8%	9%
Sales and Related	10%	10%	9%	10%	8%	10%
Management	10%	7%	7%	9%	11%	10%
Transportation and Material Moving	9%	10%	10%	10%	9%	8%
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	5%	7%	8%	5%	5%	7%
Food Preparation and Serving Related	8%	11%	11%	5%	5%	8%
Construction and Extraction	5%	6%	5%	6%	7%	6%
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	5%	5%	4%	4%	6%	5%
Educational Instruction and Library	8%	7%	6%	7%	8%	7%
Business and Financial Operations	4%	3%	3%	4%	3%	4%

Source: Lightcast analysis of 2015-2019 ACS 5-year estimates from IPUMS USA

The occupation mix contributes to the average earnings by disability type. The chart below shows the share of workers by disability type earning less than 80% of the Florida AMI in 2021. The share of workers reporting having difficulty with independent living activities, self-care, and vision exceeds the overall percentage of workers with disabilities employed in low-wage occupations.

Figure 10: Distribution of Workers with Disabilities Earning Less than 80% Florida AMI by Disability Type, 2021



Source: Lightcast analysis of 2021 ACS 1-year estimates from IPUMS USA

Average Annual Wages/Hours Worked

Workers without disabilities work, on average, more hours per week, resulting in higher wages. Additionally, workers with disabilities in Florida, on average, earn less than 80% of the state’s AMI in occupation families where they are overrepresented, including: Transportation and Material Moving Occupations, Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations, and Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations.



Table 5: Average Annual Wages and Weekly Hours by Disability Status and Occupation Family for Working-Age Adults in Florida, 2021

Occupation Family (2-Digit SOC)	Average Weekly Hours (Adjusted Based on Average Annual Weeks Worked)		Average Annual Wages (\$)	
	Workers with Disabilities	Workers without Disabilities	Workers with Disabilities	Workers without Disabilities
Architecture and Engineering	37.1	41.2	59,649	82,229
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	34.1	35.2	30,253	42,533
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	30.4	35.1	19,270	22,004
Business and Financial Operations	37.7	40.4	55,727	69,448
Community and Social Service	37.5	38.6	42,367	44,033
Computer and Mathematical	37.9	41.0	65,957	80,849
Construction and Extraction	33.6	38.5	29,550	35,996
Educational Instruction and Library	36.6	37.0	43,173	44,693
Food Preparation and Serving Related	23.6	32.8	16,248	25,677
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	39.3	38.3	51,706	67,488
Healthcare Support	40.2	35.3	23,684	26,898
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	38.9	41.2	45,474	46,769
Legal	40.3	41.4	69,547	77,697
Life, Physical, and Social Science	38.2	40.2	52,354	63,758
Management	41.7	43.6	63,172	77,411
Office and Administrative Support	35.2	37.1	33,007	38,538
Personal Care and Service	23.9	32.0	23,436	22,833
Production	39.9	39.1	33,205	39,270
Protective Service	41.8	42.4	47,668	57,762
Sales and Related	32.4	38.5	33,692	51,552
Transportation and Material Moving	30.3	39.3	23,676	38,631

Source: Lightcast analysis of 2021 ACS 1-year estimates from IPUMS USA

Transition and Destination Occupations

PWDs are concentrated in some occupations and underrepresented in others. This section focuses on the occupations where workers with disabilities are concentrated. By targeting career services around these occupations, Able Trust and other workforce development partners would naturally oversample the community of PWDs.

FLDOE/VR, The Able Trust and their partners can use data on current employment, wages, and representation of PWDs in occupations in Florida to connect this population to meaningful job opportunities.⁸ Using these metrics, we created two categories, transition occupations and destination occupations. These categories can inform the design and implementation of career services offered to PWDs.

Transition occupations. Career service providers should target workers in these occupations for upskilling and reskilling into other occupations. These jobs tend to pay lower wages than other occupations that require similar levels of education and experience, and/or they are projected to shed jobs over the next ten years. PWDs are also highly represented in these occupations, so career services that target these workers will naturally oversample PWD. Career services can build on the skills developed in these occupations and add new skills through job training to facilitate worker transitions into occupations with stronger labor market outcomes.⁹

Destination occupations. Career service providers should develop programming to connect PWDs to these occupations. These jobs tend to pay more than other occupations that require similar levels of education and experience, and Florida is projected to add employment in these occupations over the next ten years. Additionally, PWDs are well represented in these occupations, which is a positive proxy for the ability of employers to structure employment in these occupations in a way that is conducive to the success of PWDs. Career service providers can advertise these occupations as target occupations for PWDs. Career service providers that work with PWDs can develop job training and job placement programs to connect workers to these occupations, building on the already strong representation of PWDs in these occupations.¹⁰

Additional details on each of the occupations listed, including the total number of Floridians with disabilities employed, average annual wages, and disability disparity ratios, can be found in Tables 6 and 7, below, for the top 15 occupations in each of the above categories. Because the 1-year ACS microdata lacks sufficient sample sizes to provide reliable occupation-level data for Florida's workers with disabilities, these values were calculated using the 2015-2019 ACS 5-year microdata from IPUMS USA.

8 We quantify and differentiate the representation across occupations using a Disability Disparity Ratio (DDR), which measures the degree to which PWDs are represented in any given occupation relative to their representation across all occupations as compared to the share of people with disabilities employed in that same occupation relative to their representation across all occupations. If we divide the rate for PWDs by the rate for people without disabilities and the outcome is 1.5, then we know that workers with disabilities are 1.5 times more likely to be employed in that occupation than workers without disabilities. Conversely, if the result is .75, then PWDs are 25% less likely than workers without disabilities to be employed in that occupation. A ratio of 1.0 indicates that the representation of PWDs in that occupation matches their representation in the overall employed population.

9 Destination occupations meet the following criteria: $DDR \geq 1$ AND (Wages \geq 80% AMI AND Growth ≥ 0)

10 Destination occupations meet the following criteria: $DDR \geq 1$ AND (Wages \geq 80% AMI AND Growth ≥ 0)

Table 6: Top 15 Transition Occupations by total employment of PWDs in Florida, 2015-2019

Transition Occupations	Total Employed PWDs	Annual Average Wages for PWDs	Disparity Ratio
Janitors and Building Cleaners	7,521	\$16,481	1.8
Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	4,661	\$11,515	1.1
Stockers And Order Fillers	4,493	\$18,734	1.9
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	4,331	\$19,444	1.9
Construction Laborers	4,048	\$16,591	1.1
Cooks	3,519	\$18,387	1.1
Security Guards and Gambling Surveillance Officers	3,330	\$27,570	1.8
Landscaping And Groundskeeping Workers	3,130	\$17,455	1.2
Nursing Assistants	2,842	\$20,360	1.1
Carpenters	2,841	\$28,104	1.2
Office Clerks, General	2,511	\$26,722	1.1
Receptionists and Information Clerks	2,396	\$23,467	1.2
Food Preparation Workers	2,124	\$12,657	1.9
Teaching Assistants	1,479	\$21,666	1.1
Painters and Paperhangers	1,448	\$23,277	1.1

Table 7: Top 15 Destination Occupations by total employment of PWDs in Florida, 2015-2019

Destination Occupations	Total Employed PWDs	Annual Average Wages for PWDs	Disparity Ratio
Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	2,655	\$31,045	1.1
First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	1,916	\$50,430	1.3
Construction Managers	1,899	\$54,641	1.1
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	1,867	\$37,054	1.2
Management Analysts	1,635	\$80,906	1.1
Property, Real Estate, and Community Association Managers	1,465	\$42,920	1.0
Computer Occupations, All Other	1,441	\$45,483	1.1
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	1,338	\$40,644	1.4
Computer Support Specialists	1,252	\$51,072	1.1
Billing and Posting Clerks	1,238	\$30,611	1.2
Other Office and Administrative Support Workers	1,195	\$34,293	1.0
Other Teachers and Instructors	1,178	\$31,290	1.2
Social Workers, All Other	1,025	\$42,844	1.1
Other Installation, Maintenance, And Repair Workers	1,016	\$34,264	1.2
Insurance Claims and Policy Processing Clerks	876	\$31,172	1.2

Growing Occupations

Florida's economy continues to grow, offering increasing numbers of job opportunities to Floridians. Employers are challenged to fill openings for occupations with the fastest growth and may look to PWDs as a source of talent – heretofore underutilized – to supply the number of workers commensurate with workforce demand.

Table 8 shows Florida's fastest growing occupations that also pay more than 80% AMI based on 2015-2019 estimates. The table also shows the level of representation of PWDs in them and the disability disparity ratio, which is a measure of whether PWDs are underrepresented (values below 1) or well represented values above 1). Fast-growing occupations that pay well but employ less than their equivalent share of PWDs are areas of opportunity to increase representation and should receive particular attention from The Able Trust, FLDOE/VR, and workforce partners.

Occupations showing the most rapid growth may be experiencing the most acute talent constraints, and therefore may be more open to tapping underutilized sources of talent, expanding their recruitment efforts to include PWDs, and implementing accommodations to enable these Floridians to join their workforce.



Table 8: Top Growing Occupations by Projected Employment Gain

Occupation Name	Projected 10yr Employment Gain	Total Employment of PWDs (2015-2019)	Disability Disparity Ratio	Annual Average Wages PWDs (2015-2019)	Growth	Typical Entry-level Education
Other Managers	22,002	6,752	0.9	\$69,456	14%	Sub-Bachelor's
Software Developers	11,309	1,129	0.6	\$89,619	30%	Bachelor's +
Financial Managers	10,343	1,429	0.6	\$68,468	20%	Bachelor's +
Accountants and Auditors	8,713	2,982	0.8	\$50,055	12%	Bachelor's +
Medical and Health Services Managers	8,482	1,047	0.7	\$65,875	27%	Bachelor's +
Postsecondary Teachers	8,200	1,555	0.8	\$52,673	19%	Bachelor's +
Real Estate Brokers and Sales Agents	6,973	2,159	0.8	\$36,365	13%	Sub-Bachelor's
Lawyers, and judges, magistrates, and other judicial workers	6,113	1,358	0.6	\$129,216	14%	Bachelor's +
General and Operations Managers	5,995	1,615	0.7	\$87,350	13%	Bachelor's +
Insurance Sales Agents	4,950	1,102	0.7	\$43,601	16%	Sub-Bachelor's
Paralegals and Legal Assistants	3,974	1,075	0.9	\$51,042	16%	Sub-Bachelor's
Other Designers	3,965	400	0.7	\$46,903	32%	Bachelor's +
Education And Childcare Administrators	3,757	1,185	0.7	\$56,790	11%	Bachelor's +
Marketing Managers	3,715	604	0.5	\$62,718	16%	Bachelor's +
Physicians	3,676	709	0.4	\$209,651	10%	Bachelor's +
Computer and Information Systems Managers	3,350	785	0.7	\$101,434	15%	Bachelor's +
Human Resources Workers	3,324	1,181	0.8	\$59,573	11%	Bachelor's +
Flight Attendants	3,102	141	0.4	\$45,783	39%	Sub-Bachelor's
Coaches And Scouts	2,906	138	0.3	\$34,428	36%	Bachelor's +
Project Management Specialists	2,814	788	0.6	\$64,133	11%	Bachelor's +
Aircraft Pilots and Flight Engineers	2,618	97	0.2	\$134,185	22%	Bachelor's +
Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	2,564	490	0.9	\$46,224	24%	Bachelor's +
Physical Therapists	2,517	120	0.2	\$36,739	22%	Bachelor's +
Computer Systems Analysts	2,429	717	0.8	\$62,693	13%	Bachelor's +
Sales Managers	2,335	648	0.6	\$70,352	10%	Bachelor's +

Strategies and Recommendations

While the labor force participation rate and quality of workforce experiences of PWDs has lagged that of the general population over the past 30 years, the current economic climate and evolution in the world of work opens new possibilities for PWDs. Employers' acute demand for talent does not appear to be abating, especially in a state like Florida whose economy continues to expand. Employers' openness to distance and hybrid work and use of assistive technologies creates new possibilities for all workers, PWDs included.

Florida's vocational rehabilitation system with the support of The Able Trust is positioned to lead the state in cultivating a more inclusive labor force by providing the research and facilitation that will activate this latent talent pool; enable employers to identify, recruit, and support these workers; and improve effectiveness and efficiency of the service delivery system.

Comparison States

Each of the comparison states used for this study (California, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Texas) takes its own approach to organizing services and resources to support employment of PWDs. A review of programs and policy from each of the comparison states has revealed approaches that may be helpful in aligning, improving, and focusing efforts to increase employment for PWDs in Florida.

Texas is unique in that Vocational Rehabilitation is operated through its 28 Workforce Development boards. Texas Vocational Rehabilitation was moved to the Texas Workforce Commission in 2016 and is now the Texas Workforce Solutions- Vocational Rehabilitation Services (TWS-VRS). Each Workforce Solutions board across the state collaborates with TWS-VRS for their region's specific VR needs and offers services tailored to the needs of the specific local population.

The Texas Workforce Commission partnered with the University of Texas to develop training, credentialing, and endorsement programs for contracted vocational rehabilitation service providers across the state. Providers learn to appropriately train, place, and support employees with disabilities. The goal is to obtain more successful employment outcomes while holding providers to a higher standard of service.

None of the 4 states reviewed have a direct support organization in the form of an endowment fund. They all are fully funded through the government rather than a foundation that strives to raise money from community donors.



All 4 states reviewed and Florida have specialized departments or commissions for the blind and visually impaired that provide separate VR services.

VR counselors are highly compensated in the comparison states. The wage and education differentials may result in higher levels of staff turnover in Florida. Qualitative research indicated frustration among Florida VR program participants who report frequent turnover of VR counselors resulting in service changes and delays.

Industry Targeting

The industries in Florida where PWDs are a larger share of the workforce relative to the rest of the nation include:

- Retail Trade, where Floridians with disabilities have slightly higher representation than in the national Retail Trade sector
- Accommodation and Food Service, which is large in Florida and in which PWDs are proportionally more represented than in the nation as a whole
- Construction, where Floridians also exceed national representation as a share of the sector's total workforce

A deeper examination of these industries' outreach and hiring practices can reveal how they have conducted outreach and recruitment, used assistive technologies, implemented inclusive practices, and otherwise arranged themselves to be more welcoming and supportive of PWDs.

Industries in which Floridians with disabilities lag their counterparts nationally in representation include Healthcare and Social Assistance, and Manufacturing. Both sectors offer opportunities for PWDs, The Able Trust can support FLDOE /VR in helping Floridan's with disabilities achieve representation on par with national averages within these sectors by engaging employers and promoting associated career pathways, education, and training.

Growing industries, like Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, offer expanded employment opportunities for all Floridians. PWDs can be valuable talent resources for employers seeking to fill new openings in these areas. FLDOE/VR is already taking steps to prepare PWDs for these opportunities through initiatives like the ArtCIE Project. The ArtCIE Project is a pilot program that will help subminimum wage workers with disabilities build skills needed in competitive industries like the Arts. Continued implementation of such programs will support increased employability of PWDs.



Occupation Targeting

Career services for PWDs can cater to the specific labor force patterns of this population while also taking into consideration their unique concerns.

Job placement

Efforts to support the employment of PWDs can target occupations where PWDs have strong representation today. About one-quarter of workers with disabilities in Florida are concentrated in jobs within two Occupation families:

- Office and Administrative Support
- Sales and Related Occupations

Career pathing

Career pathing can cater to PWDs in two ways: focusing upskilling scaffolding on the occupations that PWDs are in today and ensuring that adequate accessibility considerations are in place for this cohort to complete skills training and connect to open jobs. The following are occupation families employing a large concentration of workers with disabilities today:

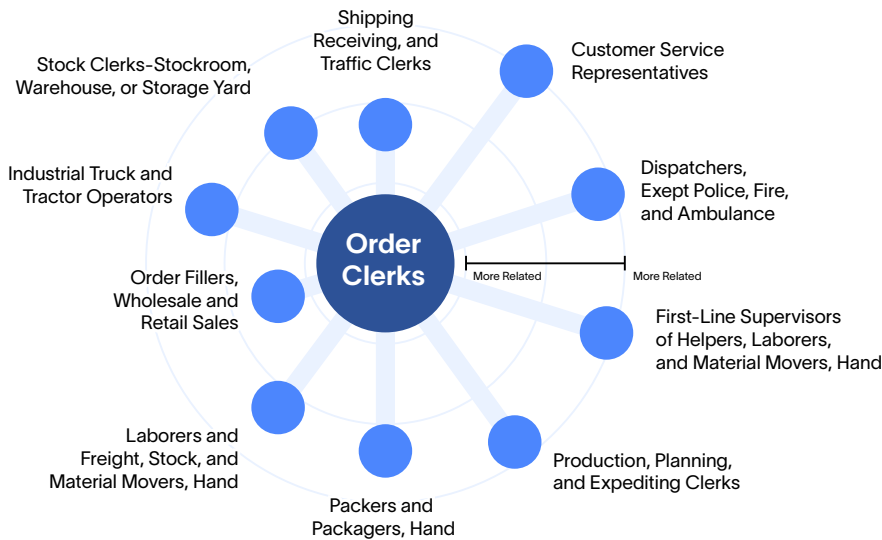
- Office and Administrative Support Occupations
- Transportation and Material Moving Occupations
- Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations
- Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations

Furthermore, career pathing can focus on the specific occupations that pay less than 80% AMI. Occupations that our analysis of 2015-2019 ACS 5-year microdata indicate earn less than this threshold and employ a high concentration of workers with disabilities include the following:

- Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners
- Stockers And Order Fillers
- Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand
- Construction Laborers
- Cooks
- Security Guards and Gambling Surveillance Officers
- Landscaping And Groundskeeping Workers
- Nursing Assistants
- Carpenters
- Office Clerks, General
- Receptionists and Information Clerks
- Food Preparation Workers
- Teaching Assistants
- Painters and Paperhangers

Sound career pathing includes reviewing the skills overlaps and gaps between different occupations along the career pathways. To better illustrate the potential of career pathing, consider the example of a person with a disability who is currently employed as an Order Clerk. The diagram below illustrates feasible transitions that an Order Clerk could make in today's labor market.





For example, Customer Service Representatives have skills similar to Order Clerks, but a higher average salary and greater upward advancement potential. To support such career transitions, workforce development practitioners can study the specific skills underlying the transition between two occupations. Continuing with the example above, here are the skill gaps that the Order Clerk would need to fill to successfully transition:

	Specialized Skills	Importance
1	Customer Service	✓✓✓✓
2	Customer Contact	✓
3	Sales	✓
4	Appointment Setting	✓
5	Prospective Clients	✓
6	Scheduling	✓
7	Customer Relationship Management (CRM)	✓
8	Repair	✓
9	Customer Billing	✓
10	Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	✓

Catering Career Services to Occupational Characteristics

The data and tables presented in this report provide the groundwork for the development and delivery of career services for Florida’s working-age population with disabilities. The Transition and Destination Occupations Section offers insights regarding how to structure career services, so they have the most impact. Transition occupations are lower paying than comparable occupations or projected to shed jobs over the next ten years, and they employ a disproportionate number of PWDs. Focusing upskilling efforts on people currently employed in transition occupations will naturally oversample PWDs and provide them with training needed to advance from their current jobs.

The Transition and Destination Occupations section can also inform job placement and employer engagement. Destination occupations are accessible (indicated by proportional or overrepresentation of PWDs), growing, and pay above average wages, making them favorable landing spots for workers moving out of transition occupations. Focusing job placement and employer engagement efforts on destination occupations will provide PWDs links to occupations where evidence suggests they have strong chances for success.

Growing Occupations identified in this report provide information on potential occupation targets in which PWDs are underrepresented, as indicated by a disability disparity ratio is less than 1. Work in these occupations likely presents various barriers to the success of PWDs in the workplace. Career services for these occupation targets should focus on employer accommodations or accessibility. In occupations where underrepresentation is an issue of awareness, services should focus on outreach to PWDs about these opportunities.

Taking Advantage of Remote Work Opportunities

The workforce development system can accommodate PWDs by taking into consideration the volume of remote work opportunities and the current representation by disability type of PWDs in those occupations.

Like all job opportunities for PWDs, remote work accommodations will be a function of disability type. When building remote work accommodations, workforce development practitioners should target occupation groups with a high volume of remote job postings and relatively strong representation of a disability type. The table below summarizes these opportunities.

Table 8: Top Growing Occupations by Projected Employment Gain

Top 10 Remote Occupations by Demand	Remote Job Postings 2019-2022	Ambulatory		Cognitive		Hearing		Vision	
		% Working Remote	Total in Occupation	% Working Remote	Total in Occupation	% Working Remote	Total in Occupation	% Working Remote	Total in Occupation
Software Developers	36,876	23%	384	19%	286	34%	423	25%	449
Customer Service Representatives	23,262	8%	3,826	9%	2488	7%	2,342	10%	2,074
Insurance Sales Agents	19,787	23%	576	14%	350	20%	490	1%	397
Computer Occupations, All Other	15,192	22%	758	53%	339	18%	560	12%	538
Registered Nurses	13,128	5%	3,013	-	1782	3%	2,355	3%	1,932
Accountants and Auditors	9,359	16%	1,335	8%	837	2%	1,007	3%	918
Management Analysts	8,514	21%	589	53%	335	33%	753	19%	503
Marketing Managers	7,903	35%	298	47%	131	0%	208	15%	239
Web Developers	7,549	38%	56	0%	75	44%	39	0%	66
Sales Managers	7,474	8%	325	5%	231	6%	432	6%	198

Sources: Lightcast analysis of job postings data and 2015-2019 ACS 5-year estimates from IPUMS USA

Remote work accommodations include myriad supports. Accessibility.com lists the following: flexible working hours, standing desks, auto-captioning software, screen readers, speech-to-text software, adaptive computer mouse or phone, noise-canceling headphones, visual search engines, and more.¹¹

11. Read the Accessibility.com article here: <https://www.accessibility.com/blog/remote-work-and-accessibility-accommodations-at-home>



Coordination and Convening

Florida has taken monumental steps towards the strategic alignment and coordination of education and workforce initiatives, including those serving PWDs.

In 2021, the Florida Legislature passed the Reimagining Education and Career Help (REACH) Act, which intends to streamline all access points to education and career assistance across the state's workforce resources in the Florida Department of Children and Families, FLDOE, FL [Digital Service], and CareerSource Florida. The REACH Act also requires Florida's workforce agencies to collaborate with business and industry leaders to create a state-approved list of credentials to align training with workforce demands.

A more streamlined approach to workforce service delivery offers many benefits, including coordinating and convening providers, reducing redundancy and confusion, and routing individuals towards the most appropriate services, providing much needed clarity for people with disabilities, their families, employers, and service providers. As this initiative gets underway, FLDOE/VR with the support of The Able Trust are positioned to ensure PWDs gain access to, and benefit from, the broad spectrum of career services and training programs available within the state.

Encouraging self-advocacy among PWDs and advocating on their behalf will be an important step in ensuring that the needs and priorities of PWDs are taken into consideration as the state revamps its workforce system. Doing so will also help to situate Floridians with disabilities as part of the workforce solution for Florida businesses and employers.

Increasing Awareness

This report identified industries offering many viable job and career opportunities for PWDs. The focus groups and listening sessions indicated that PWDs and their families were often unaware of employment opportunities in general, and more specifically, of industries and occupations that are more disability-friendly in terms of accessibility and accommodations.

An aggressive campaign to increase job, industry, and career awareness among PWDs, their families, and the organizations who serve them can help connect them to the most viable opportunities and enable them to seek appropriate education and training experiences to increase their competitiveness for those opportunities. A career awareness campaign can also help drive education and training programs that serve PWDs to focus on the most viable options, and to ensure that relevant instruction and accommodation strategies are addressed.

A common theme articulated in the surveys and focus groups is that many employers do not understand how to manage and/or work with PWDs, and need assistance in visualizing how the situation will be a success. Workers with disabilities face an uphill battle for employment across the entire state with the



challenges being most profound in the rural areas. Pockets of relative success can be found but most are concentrated in fields that are not considered “good” jobs.

Employers have not shown the initiative to foster more inclusive workplaces. Such actions may include actively recruiting and engaging PWDs and providing accommodations to support their success in the workplace. Through an aggressive campaign to reach Florida employees, FLDOE/VR with the support of The Able Trust can provide not only the needed awareness, but actual resources and supports to help Florida businesses succeed in hiring PWD.

Policy

Disability Service Workers

Professionals and paraprofessionals who work with PWDs often earn lower wages. Advocacy for workers in the disability services system and support for more favorable wages can help to increase the number and quality of those workers, and in turn, result in higher quality services and better outcomes.

System Alignment

PWDs can have a difficult time navigating the large and complex service delivery system. With a high-level, statewide view of the service delivery system, the FLDOE/VR and The Able Trust can identify redundancies and gaps in the system and advocate for services that can ensure that services are available where and how they are most needed. Reviewing current offerings and adding new services can work to ensure:

- Service availability across the state, with sufficient services especially in rural areas
- Service availability that addresses the range of disability types, including disabilities that are both seen and unseen
- Service availability to those connected to state-supported institutions, such as education and social service organizations, and to those not connected to the institutions via community-based organizations and proactive efforts to connect to PWDs
- Active promotional campaigns to ensure that all Floridians with disabilities are aware of the services in their community, that home care services are available, and that eligibility for services considers characteristics including but not limited to age, disability status, language, and family situation.

Training and Support for Workforce System Partners

For institutions that serve the general population (including PWDs), the FLDOE/VR and The Able Trust can lead efforts to ensure that those organizations

receive training and materials to better enable them to serve PWDs and refer to organizations with more specialized services and resources for PWDs as appropriate. Workforce Centers and educational institutions are well-positioned to assist PWDs to achieve employment and can especially benefit from deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities they face and an enhanced set of services, resources, and referral capabilities to engage and serve this population more effectively.

Training and Support for Employers

Employers are often unaware of best practices, resources, and services available to them that can enhance their ability to hire PWDs. A campaign to increase awareness of the benefits of hiring PWDs; employment referral sources that serve PWDs; and assistive technologies and other accommodations for PWDs can increase hiring and enhance connections between employers and workers with disabilities. An education campaign to increase employers' understanding of common discriminatory practices and their responsibilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is also warranted.

Research and Thought Leadership

FLDOE/VR with the support of The Able Trust and other organizations supporting PWDs in Florida can and should expand on current research and thought leadership to support this population. The resources below would contribute to a body of knowledge that would enable further support of PWDs in the workforce.

Employer Best Practices

Many employers reported in the listening sessions that they do not have expertise as it relates to PWDs, making them hesitant to embrace the perceived "challenges" of recruiting and onboarding workers with disabilities. PWDs are aware of these concerns, making them reluctant to self-identify as having a disability. Consequently, workers with disabilities often forgo rights and accommodations to which they are entitled, and from which they would greatly benefit. Employers with experience employing and supporting PWDs can be the best advocates for dispelling myths and misunderstandings within the broader community of employers.

Similarly, the unique and impactful initiatives of employers currently engaging large numbers of workers with disabilities can serve as models of "best practice" for their counterparts interested in cultivating a stronger, more inclusive workforce.

The identification and dissemination of such examples can both guide employers in recruiting and supporting workers with disabilities and illustrate the benefits of making such efforts. Based recruit and support workers with disabilities how they can recruit workers through non-traditional avenues,

access and utilize assistive technologies more efficiently and affordably than they might realize, access supportive services, reimagine the time/place/manner in which work happens, and accommodation of special needs that can enable greater participation by PWDs.

Post High-School Experiences

The high school graduation rates for all PWDs are improving each year and persons with sensory disabilities have a graduation rate that exceeds that of the general population. People with disabilities can succeed in educational attainment, and yet that success is not as frequently reflected in their subsequent employment outcomes. Following those successful high school completers can reveal what disrupts their positive trajectories, and aid in the identification of interventions to support PWDs as they transition high school experience with postsecondary and/or work experience. Further research questions may include:

- What proportion of high school graduates with disabilities transition to postsecondary education? Of those:
 - What proportion enter four-year programs?
 - What proportion enter two-year degree programs?
 - What proportion enter technical or vocational programs?
 - For each of the program types indicated, what special services or disability accommodations are available?
 - Do high school graduates with disabilities (ambulatory, vision, cognitive, etc.) cluster by disability type into different types of programs or at different types of providers?
- What proportion of high school graduates with disabilities transition directly to work? Of those that do:
 - Do they commonly disclose their disabilities to their employers in the interview or onboarding process?
 - What are the most common occupational, industry, and career areas post high school?
 - Do their post high-school career areas differ based on where they reside in Florida and/or the nature of their disability?
- What proportion of high school graduates with disabilities neither work nor continue their education after high school?

With better employment outcomes for young adults with disabilities, further research can inform how approaches that appear to work for young adults can also benefit older PWDs. Longitudinal studies can help to determine the benefits of intervention at a younger age endure as the individuals get older, or whether different services and supports for older individuals are needed.

Appendix

Vocational Regions Map

