

Advancing Apprenticeship Opportunities for People with Disabilities

Registered Apprenticeship programs promote recruitment and retention of a highly-skilled workforce and recognize the value of attracting a diverse array of candidates to good, quality jobs, including youth and adults with disabilities. Further, there is evidence that people with disabilities participate and succeed in Registered Apprenticeship programs at higher rates when they are provided with opportunities and support.¹ While there is still plenty of room for growth, as of 2022, the number of apprentices who self-identify as an individual with a disability has grown to over 3,000.² Apprentices with disabilities are most concentrated in the occupations of electrician, plumber, construction craft laborer, pipe fitter and truck driver.

THE ROLE OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR (DOL) OFFICES OF APPRENTICESHIP (OA) AND DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT POLICY (ODEP)

DOL supports best practices in equity and expanding opportunities for people with disabilities and other underserved apprenticeship populations. OA staff work with employers who wish to hire more persons with disabilities to develop programs to meet their goals and connect them with intermediaries, guides, and investment opportunities to reach their intended audiences. OA has substantially increased its investments in Registered Apprenticeship in recent years, including programs that target youth and adults with disabilities in apprenticeship, recognizing that building a strong and diverse pipeline of skilled workers is critical for companies to grow their business and compete in the global economy. Visit [our website](#) for more information about these investments.

OA partners with ODEP to promote inclusive Registered Apprenticeship program models that meet employer needs by attracting a diverse array of candidates, including people with disabilities. ODEP works to promote inclusion of people with disabilities in Registered Apprenticeship programs by influencing national and state policies and providing effective practices. For more information, visit [ODEP's website](#).

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

DOL's 2017 Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) in Apprenticeship Final Rule helps employers reduce barriers for people with disabilities and to 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 recruit, train, and retain a diverse workforce. It also established a seven percent people with disabilities national utilization goal for registered apprenticeship sponsors, representing the estimated percentage of the civilian labor force that has a disability.





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

Since 2020, ODEP has run the [Partnership on Inclusive Apprenticeship \(PIA\)](#) to

advance policies and practices to improve access to career pathways and talent pipelines. PIA has received \$3.8 million in funding to drive careers in key high-growth, high-demand job fields, such as information technology, healthcare, clean energy, and cybersecurity. It has provided technical assistance and outreach to help support intermediaries from industries, employers, apprentices, providers of services, and other core stakeholders. This work has aligned with federal and DOL efforts to foster diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA). Visit [PIA's website](#) to access the [Apprenticeship for All Podcast](#) and resources and guides, such as the [Designing Inclusive Apprenticeships Guide](#), [Becoming an Apprentice Guide](#), [Success Stories](#), Resource Library, [policy and practice briefs](#), and EEO information.

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](#).

- ▶ **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.

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.

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