



The Women and Girls Foundation launched the Training Regional Advocates to Influence Leadership (TRAIL) program in 2020, in collaboration with Dr. Josie Badger. The goal of the program is to develop a statewide legislative advocacy training program for people with disabilities. TRAIL supports advocates with disabilities in learning strategies to make systemic change.

Recommendations represent the ideas of TRAIL members and do not represent those of the Women and Girls Foundation or any partners. For additional information please contact Dr Josie Badger at Josie@JBadgerConsultingInc.org

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Employment for Pennsylvanians with Disabilities

Employment is often the thing people define themselves by – what they do, and where they work, dictates many other aspects of their life. The chance to have meaningful, fulfilling work is pivotal for disabled Pennsylvanians, and remains an area in which there is much work to be done.

Obtaining Meaningful Employment

- In 2017, the employment rate of disabled Pennsylvanians was 37.1%, compared to 80.4% for non-disabled Pennsylvanians.
- Many disabled people are forced to choose to work a lower-paying, less fulfilling job to remain eligible for their benefits, including healthcare and attendant / nursing care.
- Lack of accessible transportation can severely limit disabled Pennsylvanian's employment prospects.
- The ongoing pandemic has highlighted both the feasibility and the need to offer more remote employment opportunities that allow disabled employees to thrive.

Discrimination in the Workplace

- A stigma against hiring and promoting employees with disabilities continues to exist in the work culture.
- Obtaining a "reasonable accommodation" in the workplace as permitted by the Americans with Disabilities Act can be a challenging and stressful process.

Subminimum Wage Continues

- Section 14(C) of the Fair Labor Standards Act permits employers to apply for a certificate that allows them to pay disabled employees below minimum wage.
- This practice inhibits employees with disabilities from attaining gainful employment and financial independence.



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Employment for Pennsylvanians with Disabilities *Policy Recommendations*

Eliminate subminimum wage jobs for people with disabilities (14 Cs).

- In certain circumstances people with disabilities are allowed to be paid per item that they make or task that they do, resulting in wages that are significantly lower than minimum wage. This payment structure often occurs within segregated, sheltered workshops where employees with disabilities have minimal interaction with nondisabled peers.
- Individuals should have the right to competitive integrated employment where they work alongside people with and without disabilities and to earn at least minimum wage.
- One example is the [Transformation to Competitive Integrated Employment Act \(TCIEA\)](#). Similar state legislation has been introduced

Expand Medical Assistance for Workers with Disabilities (MAWD)

- Medical Assistance for Workers with Disabilities (MAWD) is a Medicaid buy-in program in Pennsylvania for people with disabilities that are significant enough to make them eligible for Social Security but have an earned income that would otherwise make them ineligible for Medical Assistance (Medicaid). This program allows individuals to receive Medical Assistance and waiver services while working.
- Standardizing the premiums, and increasing the income and asset limits for all enrollees, it would allow more individuals to pursue jobs.
- Each County Assistance Office should have a certified benefits counselor on staff to support individuals who are pursuing employment.

Support Infrastructure initiatives that improve transportation options for workers with disabilities

- Accessible transportation is more expensive with limited availability and services.
- Supports need to be implemented to improve access to affordable and accessible transportation for workers with disabilities who rely on transportation for employment.
- Rideshare programs should be further explored and supported for places of employment.

Paid Family and Medical Leave

- Increases workplace retention rates of employees with disabilities through their access to paid time off to address medical needs/care; be able to care for their loved ones and elders who need care; and/or to welcome a new child into their family.