

**Maryland State Department of Education
Division of Rehabilitation Services
Competitive Integrated Employment Fact Sheet**

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), places extensive emphasis on the achievement of competitive integrated employment for individuals with disabilities. Per WIOA regulations, competitive integrated employment outcomes under the Vocational Rehabilitation program must meet the following three criteria: (1) competitive earnings, (2) integrated location, and (3) opportunities for advancement. If an individual's employment fails to satisfy any one of the three components, the employment will not meet the definition of competitive integrated employment and is no longer allowable under the VR program. Additional details regarding these three components are provided below:

Competitive Earnings

- Earnings are equal to or greater than the Federal, State, or local minimum wage rate, whichever is higher, where the place of employment is located; and
- Comparable to the customary rate paid by the employer to employees without disabilities in similar positions with comparable skills, experience, and training.

Integrated Location

- Employment is in a setting typically found in the community (a setting in the competitive labor market), and
- The employee with the disability will interact with both 1) employees without disabilities in the work unit and the entire employment site while performing his or her job duties, and 2) other persons (e.g., vendors and customers) without disabilities, to the same extent that employees without disabilities in similar positions interact with these persons.

Opportunities for Advancement

- The employee with the disability must be eligible for the same opportunities for advancement that are available to employees without disabilities in similar positions.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Question: Does this emphasis on competitive integrated employment prevent DORS from referring individuals with disabilities for employment with non-profit organizations when they have both non-integrated employment opportunities and competitive integrated employment opportunities?

Answer: No. DORS may support individuals with disabilities in obtaining and maintaining employment with non-profit organizations in any position that meets the criteria given above for competitive integrated employment.

Question: Does the emphasis on competitive integrated employment mean that DORS cannot refer individuals with disabilities who want to work for non-profit organizations in state or federal contracts which are not considered integrated employment?

Answer: No. Under 34 CFR 361.37 (b), DORS is required to refer any individual who wishes to pursue an outcome other than competitive integrated employment to other organizations that might best meet the needs of that individual.

Question: Does this emphasis on competitive integrated employment mean that DORS cannot pay for services required by an individual to obtain or maintain employment in non-integrated settings?

Answer: Yes. An individual with a disability may be found ineligible or no longer eligible for vocational rehabilitation services if he or she chooses to pursue employment in a non-integrated setting. Therefore, CRPs will not receive payment from DORS for the placement of an individual into these non-integrated employment settings or any follow-along services that the individual may need to be successful in these non-integrated employment settings.