



## Workforce Investment Act Services to Individuals with Disabilities Are Individuals with Disabilities Being Served Fairly?

### Workforce Investment Act

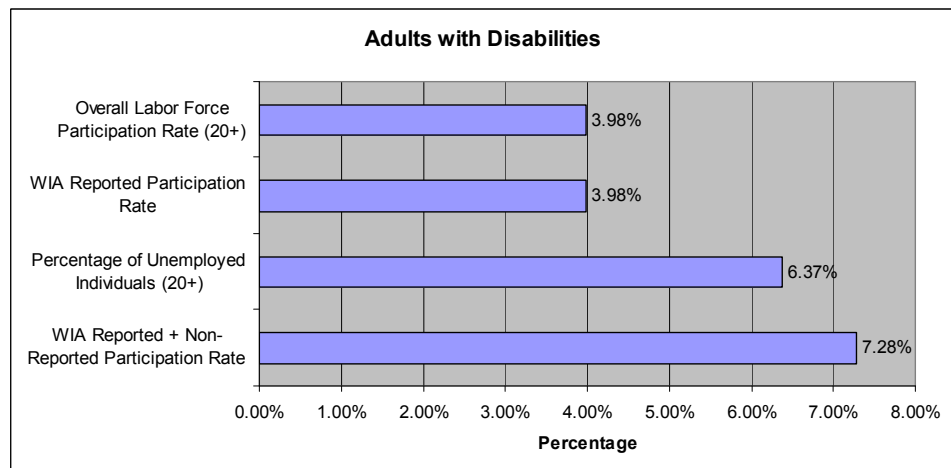
The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 set up a national system of employment and training services, most of which are delivered at the local level. Local WIA services are provided for three distinct population groups: adults (aged 18 and above), youth (aged 14-21), and dislocated workers. While WIA adult services can be provided to any adults in the labor force, they usually are provided to disadvantaged (frequently unemployed) adults because of the limited amount of funds within the system.

Youth services must be provided to low-income youth that have an additional barrier to success, such as deficient in basic literacy skills; a school dropout; homeless, a runaway, or a foster child; pregnant or a parent; an offender; or an individual who requires additional assistance to complete an educational program or secure employment.

Dislocated workers are individuals who have been terminated or laid off; have received a notice of termination or layoff; were self-employed but are unemployed as a result of economic conditions or natural disasters; or are displaced homemakers. Because the WIA system cannot select the characteristics of the dislocated workers they serve – they are dependent on the characteristics of the dislocated workers in each region – this analysis of WIA services to individuals with disabilities focuses only on the adult and youth programs.

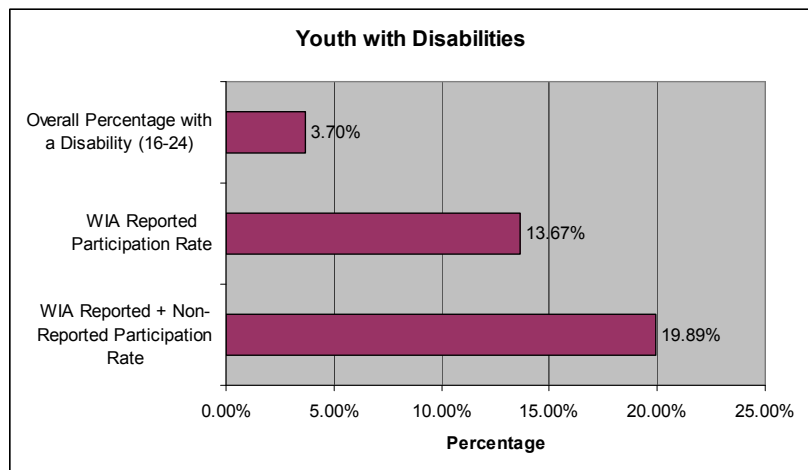
### Participation Level

The WIA system is serving adults with disabilities at a rate equal to their presence in the labor force. From April 2008 to March 2009, 4 percent of all WIA adult program exiters were individuals with disabilities, the exact same percentage as that of adults with disabilities (age 20 and above) in the civilian labor force in 2009.



But this may not be a fair comparison. Because the WIA system's adult programs focus on serving the unemployed (though not exclusively), it may be more reasonable to compare the system's service record to the percentage of adults with disabilities within the *unemployed population*, which was 6 percent in 2009. While we're rethinking the appropriate comparison, however, we also need to reconsider our calculation of the presence of individuals with disabilities within the WIA adult population. The WIA data show a very large non-report rate to the question of disability status, and it may be reasonable to assume that most of the non-reporters (and even some of those that report they have no disabilities) have a disability and do not want to publicize it, for fear that this might place them at a disadvantage in the eyes of potential employers. If you add the WIA non-reporters to those that report having a disability, the percentage of adult program exiters with disabilities served increases to over 7 percent.

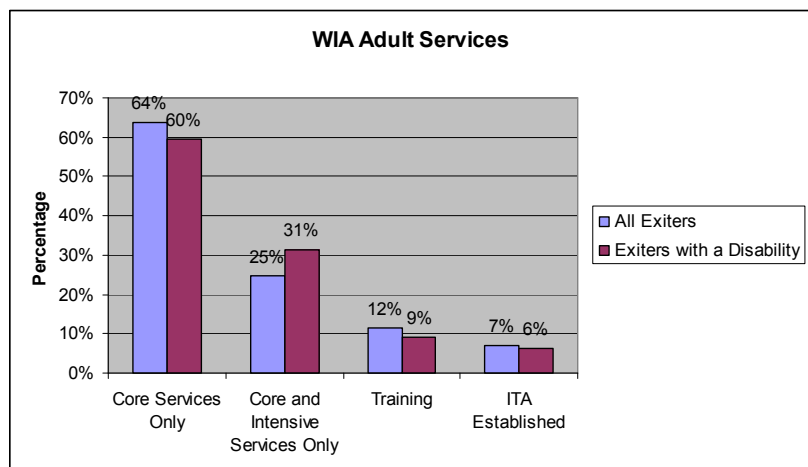
An analysis of youth services shows an even greater degree of attention to individuals with disabilities. While the overall percentage of youth (ages 16 to 24) with disabilities was 4 percent in 2009, 14 percent of WIA youth exiters (April 2008 to March 2009) reported having disabilities, while 20 percent either reported having a disability or did not report their disability status.

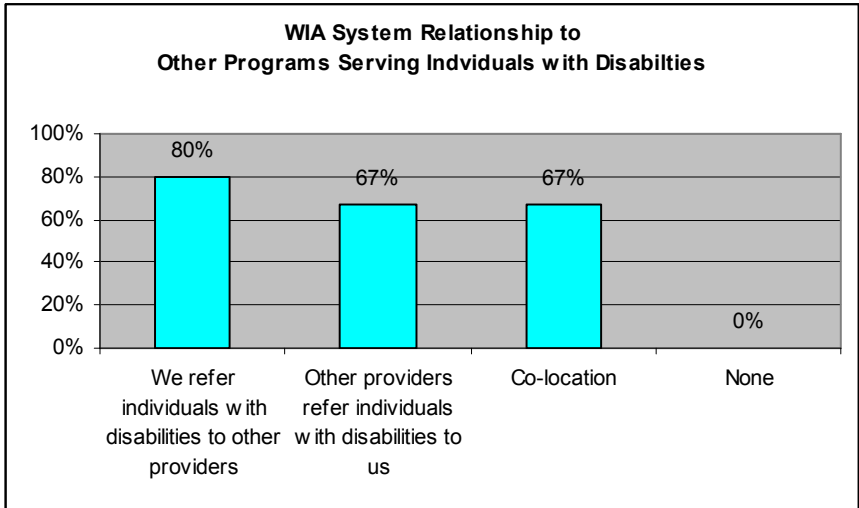


It is also important to remember that WIA is not the only program providing employment services to individuals with disabilities. Both the federally-funded Vocational Rehabilitation and Ticket to Work programs are designed specifically for that purpose. In fact, these programs are much better funded than WIA is. Vocational Rehabilitation Services at the Department of Education received \$3.5 billion in FY 10 and Ticket to Work provides additional funding from the mandatory side of the budget to assist people with disabilities, while all WIA formula programs total just \$3 billion.

### Services

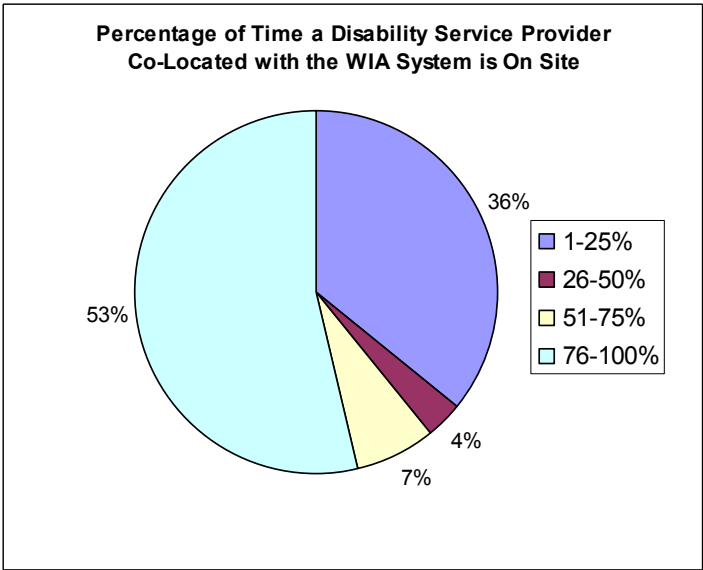
Services to WIA adult participants do appear to vary depending on whether individuals do or do not have a disability. Adults with disabilities exiting between April 2008 and March 2009 were more likely to receive intensive services (31 percent vs. 25 percent), but less likely to receive training (9 percent vs. 12 percent).





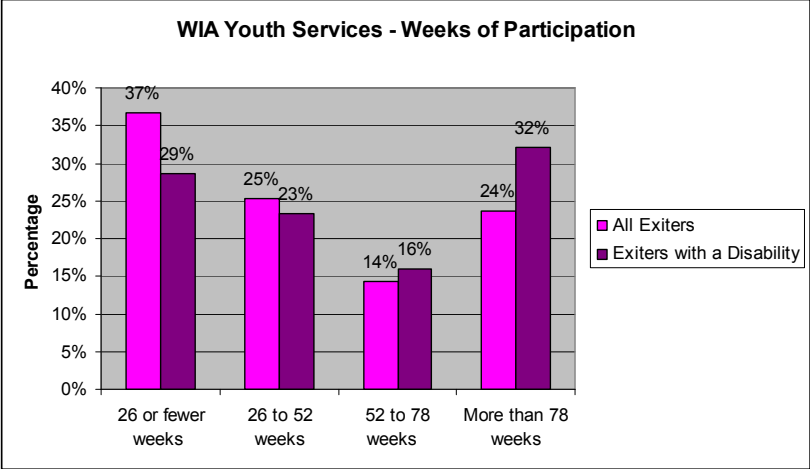
WIA services to adults with disabilities, however, tells only part of the story. Equally important is the access the WIA system provides to other programs serving individuals with disabilities. A National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB) survey conducted in 2010 found that all WIBs had some relationship with service providers that assist

individuals with disabilities. Almost 80 percent of WIA programs refer individuals with disabilities to other programs. Sixty-seven percent (67%) receive referrals from other programs, and 67 percent are co-located with service providers that assist individuals with disabilities.



The same NAWB survey found that, for those WIBs with co-location, the amount of time a disability service provider is on-site varies. While 54 percent indicated that a disability provider is on-site more than 75 percent of the time, 36 percent indicated that the disability provider is on-site less than 26 percent of the time.

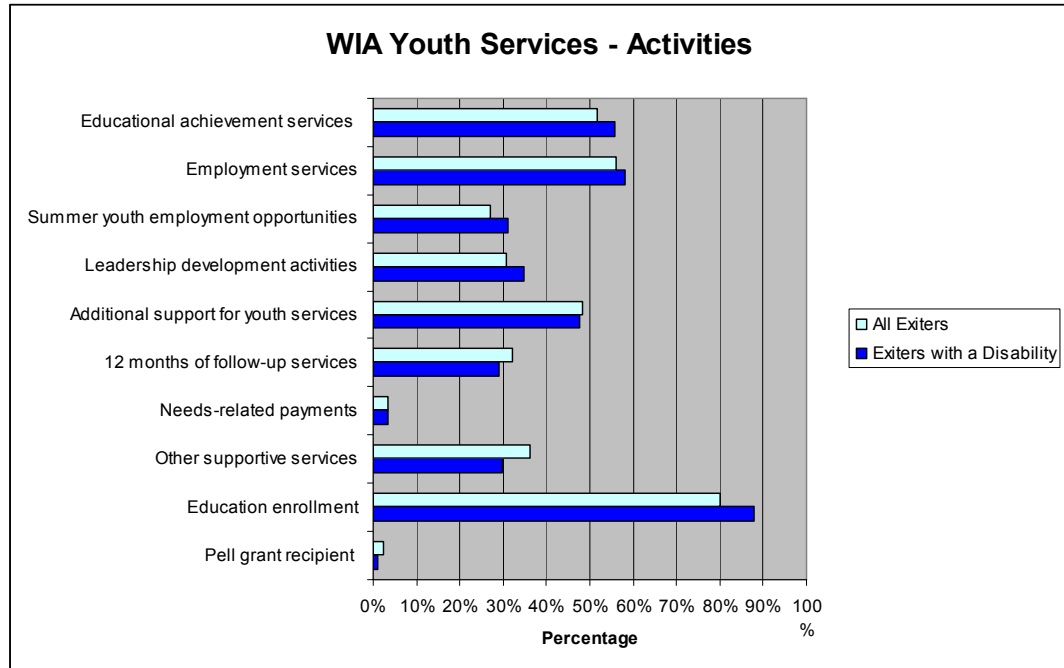
On average, the WIA system provides longer programs for youth with disabilities than youth as a whole. Youth exiting between April 2008 and March 2009, had participated for an



average of 56.2 weeks, while youth with disabilities had participated for an average of 68.2 weeks. This is apparent in the graph to the left, which shows the breakdown in weeks of participation. A lower percentage of youth with disabilities (compared to all youth) participated for 52 or fewer weeks, while a higher percentage of youth with disabilities participated for 52 or more weeks.

Youth with disabilities are more likely to be enrolled in a number of important activities:

- Educational achievement services,
- Employment services,
- Summer youth employment opportunities,
- Leadership development activities; and
- Education enrollment.



The only activities where youth with disabilities might be significantly under-represented are support services and follow-up services, and this may be because they are able to access other disability-only programs for these services.

### Outcomes

Outcomes for adults with disabilities are not as good as those for all adult exiters. This, unfortunately, reflects the overall employment pattern for individuals with disabilities in the workforce, not just those that receive WIA services.

### WIA Adult Outcomes

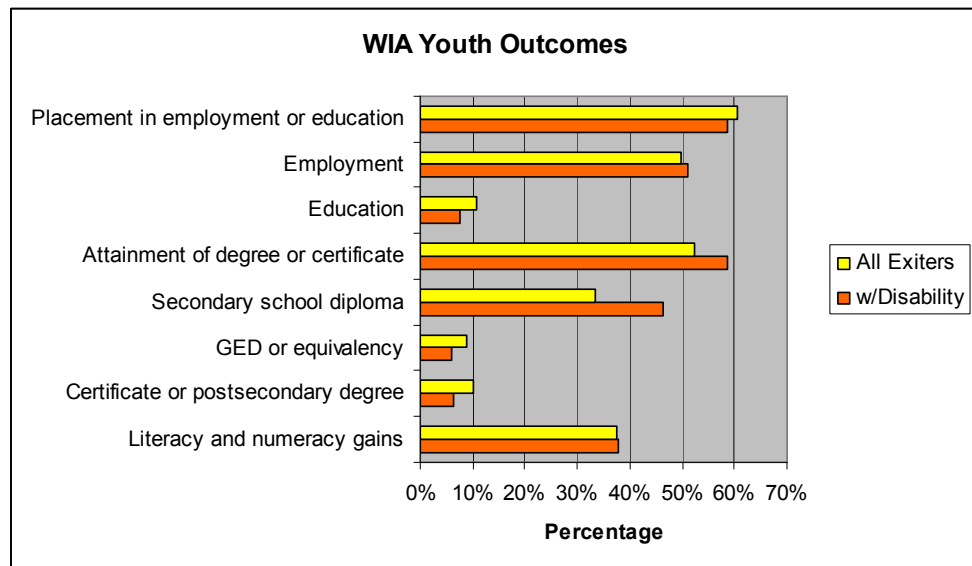
	All Exitters	Exiters with Disabilities
Entered employment (quarter after exit) <sup>1</sup>	68.1%	53.4%
Retention in 2nd and 3rd quarters <sup>2</sup>	83.8%	79.0%
Average earnings in 2nd and 3rd quarters <sup>2</sup>	\$14,811	\$11,509

<sup>1</sup>Based on exiters from October 2007 to September 2008.

<sup>2</sup>Based on exiters from April 2007 to March 2008.

The outcomes for WIA youth with disabilities are more mixed. Youth with disabilities were slightly less likely to be placed in education and employment than were all youth participants (59% for exiters with disabilities, 61% for all exiters), but when this is broken down, youth with disabilities were very slightly more likely to be placed in employment (51% vs. 50%), while less likely to be placed in education (8% vs. 11%).

Overall, youth with disabilities were more likely than the total youth population to attain a degree or certificate (59% vs. 52%). When this is broken down, youth with disabilities were more likely to attain a secondary school diploma (47% vs. 33%), but less likely to attain a GED or the equivalent (6% vs. 9%) or a certificate or postsecondary degree (6% vs. 10%). Youth with disabilities were just as likely to achieve literacy and numeracy gains as were the total youth population (38%).



Placement in employment or education and attainment of a degree or certificate are based on exiters from October 2007 to September 2008. Literacy and numeracy gains are based on exiters from April 2007 to March 2008.

**Conclusion**

When all factors are taken together – participation level, services, and outcomes – it does not appear that the WIA system is under-serving individuals with disabilities. In addition, it is important to recognize that WIA may not always be the best service provider for any particular individual with a disability. Many individuals with disabilities may be better served by programs dedicated to serving them, such as Vocational Rehabilitation and Ticket to Work. WIA is an important part of the workforce development delivery system for individuals with disabilities – and it is doing its fair share – but it is not the only part of that delivery system.

**Sources**

Unless otherwise noted, data on WIA participation, services, and outcomes came from *PY 2008 WIASRD Data Book*, Social Policy Research Associates, January 19, 2010. All numbers refer to exiters from April 2008 to March 2009 unless noted in the tables or graphs.

([http://www.doleta.gov/Performance/results/pdf/PY\\_2008\\_WIASRD\\_Data\\_Book\\_FINAL\\_1192010.pdf](http://www.doleta.gov/Performance/results/pdf/PY_2008_WIASRD_Data_Book_FINAL_1192010.pdf))

The only other information on WIA participation and services, as noted in the text, came from a National Association of Workforce Boards survey conducted between June and August, 2010.

General data on individuals with disabilities came from United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Economic News Release, Table 1. Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population by disability status and selected characteristics, 2009 annual averages, August 25, 2010. (<http://www.bls.gov/news.release/disabl.t01.htm>)

FY 2010 budget figures were taken from the Budget of the United States Government (<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/usbudget/>).