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# Policy Research Brief

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RESEARCH AND  
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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

## A Review of Commonly-Used State Employment Measures in Intellectual and Developmental Disability Services

*This Policy Research Brief summarizes publicly-available data sources that provide information about the employment of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It provides important information about these data sources, including their purposes, key definitions, and where to access the public data. Using these data sources, a state-by-state comparison of employment outcomes is conducted to provide readers with a picture of the employment landscape for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Finally, a discussion about how the data can be used, and the limitations of the data, is provided. The analysis was conducted at the University of Minnesota's Research and Training Center on Community Living (RTC). It reviews data gathered in 2010 and 2011. This brief was authored by Derek Nord, Ph.D., Research Associate at the RTC. The study was supported by Grant #H133B080005 from the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, U.S. Department of Education, to the RTC. For further information, please contact Derek Nord at nord0364@umn.edu.*

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### ■ Introduction

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There is wide agreement that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are underrepresented in the general workforce (American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities & The Arc of the United States, 2008; Migliore, Mank, Grossi, & Rogan, 2007). Often framed as *Employment First*, there is renewed focus and energy to improve the employment of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities nationally. As a current grassroots movement, Employment First aims to increase the employment of people with disabilities through changes in policy, practices, and expectations of the disability support system and many other stakeholders, including people with disabilities and their family members. Employment First seeks to make employment in the community alongside employees

without disabilities, earning minimum or prevailing wage, the first and preferred outcome for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (Niemi, Lavin, & Owens, 2009; Kiernan, Hoff, Freeze, & Mank, 2011).

The Employment First movement is gaining momentum. Employment First policies affecting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities have been legislatively passed or administratively approved in 18 states, and many other states have ongoing initiatives but no official policy at this time (Hoff, 2012). At the national level, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services recently issued updated employment and service definitions, as well as guidance to inform states about how 1915(c) Waivers can be used to increase the employment of Waiver recipients (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011), many of whom have intellectual and developmental disabilities. The National Governors Association (2012) also announced an initiative to increase the employment of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities by supporting state policy leaders in assessing and developing more employment effective policies.

Current employment data is an effective ally in advocating for and making policy changes. To understand the current status of employment for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and to inform the future direction of intellectual and developmental disability services and supports across the country, numerous state data sources have been used by policymakers, state agency leadership, and

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A summary of research on policy issues affecting persons with developmental disabilities. Published by the Research and Training Center on Community Living, Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota.

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researchers. A challenge when using different employment data sources is understanding how they differ in purpose, in target population, and by definitions of employment and successful employment outcomes.

This *Policy Research Brief* provides an overview and description of commonly-used state employment outcome measures in intellectual and developmental disability services, policy, and research. Using the most current research, it also provides a state-by-state summary and cross-state comparison of these measures. Implications to policy, practice, and research are also discussed.

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## ■ Methodology

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The inclusion criteria for the data sources in this review included the following:

- The data sources provide employment outcomes of adults with intellectual, developmental, and/or cognitive disabilities.
- The data provided is aggregated at the state-level.
- The state-aggregated data are easily accessible for public consumption and widely used in policy and research activities.

After identifying the data sources, publicly-available data were accessed to provide the state employment outcomes. When state data were unavailable from a specific source, each datum was treated as missing. Once data were fully gathered, state ranks were calculated for each measure on the employment outcome of interest. States with higher employment outcomes were ranked closer to one. When multiple states reported the same outcome for a measure, the state rank was deemed a tie. States with missing data were not ranked.

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## ■ Findings

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The assessment and analysis of employment data sources reveal several important findings, including, (a) a list and description of commonly-used data sources in the intellectual and developmental disability policy, services, and research communities; and (b) a state-by-state comparison across each employment measure.

### Commonly-Used Data Sources for State Employment Measures

Four data sources were identified that met the inclusion criteria for this study, two from non-governmental organizations and two from federal government agencies. The two from non-governmental organizations were:

- *National Core Indicators – Consumer Survey (NCI)* (Human Services Research Institute & The National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services, 2011).
- *ICI National Survey of Day and Employment Services for People with Developmental Disabilities* (Institute for Community Inclusion, n.d.).

The two sources from federal government agencies were:

- *Rehabilitation Services Administration Case Service Report*, also known as *RSA-911* (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).
- *American Community Survey (ACS)* (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

As highlighted in Table 1, the data sources vary in their target populations and how employment is defined for the publicly accessible data. For example, one data source, *ACS*, estimates the population of people with cognitive disabilities in each state. This population is defined in a broad way that does not explicitly target adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Instead, it targets adults with physical, mental, or emotional conditions that affect concentration, remembering, or making decisions. This includes adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities as well as a number of other conditions; therefore, *ACS* estimates cannot be used to explicitly identify intellectual and developmental disability prevalence and outcomes, but they do provide a state population estimate that encompasses intellectual and developmental disabilities.

In contrast, the remaining three data sources provide a programmatic perspective, where the population is service users with both intellectual and developmental disabilities, or only intellectual disabilities. There are important differences among these data sources: The *NCI* data samples adults who receive any state developmental disability service, the *ICI* national survey provides data on adults who receive day and employment supports in state developmental disability services, and *RSA-911* provides data on service recipients with intellectual disabilities who received services and whose cases were closed either with or without a job.

There are also differences in how the publicly-available data define employment. Both the *NCI* and *ICI* data include individual community-based employment, as well as group employment such as enclaves and work crews, as an employment outcome. Conversely, *RSA-911* data defines its primary outcome, the Rehabilitation Rate, as the percent of service recipients who obtain work among people who qualify for services, obtain an Individualized Employment Plan, and receive a case closure. Employment in *ACS* is self-reported by the individual or the head of the household and denotes that a person was paid to work during a reference week or they had a job during the reference week but temporarily did not work.

**Table 1: Accessible State-Level Employment Data Sources**

Source	Recent Year Available	Author	Population	Employment Variable Definition	State Data Available At
<i>National Core Indicators - Consumer Survey (NCI)</i>	2010 - 2011	Human Services Research Institute & National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disability Services	Recipients of state developmental disability services.	<b>Community job:</b> Percent of recipients with a paid job in a community-based setting; includes supported employment, competitive employment, enclave, or work crew.	<a href="http://www.nationalcoreindicators.org">www.nationalcoreindicators.org</a>
<i>ICI National Survey of Day and Employment Services for People with Developmental Disabilities</i>	Fiscal Year 2010	Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts Boston	Recipients of day and employment services.	<b>Integrated employment:</b> Percent of recipients with competitive, individual supported, group supported, and self-employment.	<a href="http://www.statedata.info">www.statedata.info</a>
<i>Rehabilitation Services Administration Case Service Report (RSA-911)</i>	Fiscal Year 2010	Rehabilitation Services Administration, U.S. Department of Education	Recipients of vocational rehabilitation services with intellectual disabilities with cases closed due to successful or unsuccessful job placement.	<b>Rehabilitation rate:</b> The percent of all recipients with intellectual disabilities with Individualized Employment Plans who were employed at case closure.	<a href="http://www.statedata.info">www.statedata.info</a>
<i>American Community Survey (ACS)</i>	2010	U.S. Census Bureau	Non-institutionalized people with a cognitive disability, defined as having a physical, mental, or emotional condition that presents a serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions.	<b>Employment rate:</b> The percentage of non-institutionalized people with a cognitive disability, ages 18-64, in the United States who were employed in 2010.	<a href="http://www.disabilitystatistics.org">www.disabilitystatistics.org</a>

## State Employment Outcomes and Rankings

Table 2 presents employment outcomes achieved by each state across the identified data sources. As can be seen, there is considerable state-by-state variability within each data source. Additionally, the number of states reporting data varied; the *NCI* had 15 states participating in the most recent year, the *ICI National Survey of Day and Employment Services* had 41 states providing data, whereas data for all states and the District of Columbia were available from *RSA-911* and *ACS*.

State rankings of employment outcomes differ across the four data sources, reflecting differences in sample size, margin of error, and even definitions of variables being measured. These differences explain why, for example, *NCI* ranked Oklahoma highest in people receiving intellectual and developmental disability services working in community jobs, while the *ICI National Survey of Day and Employment Services* ranked Washington State highest in achieving integrated employment for people receiving day and employment services, *RSA-911* ranked Delaware highest in the rehabilitation rate for people with intellectual disabilities, and

*ACS* ranked North Dakota highest in the employment rate among people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. These apparent “firsts” vary from one source to another because of differences in what the sources measure and how they measure it. Taken together, the four data sources certainly add value by providing more information about state employment outcomes than any one source could. However, readers must avoid over-generalizing from limited data that varies in content from one source to another.

## Discussion

Employment outcome data is an important ingredient in effective advocacy, research, and policy advancement. As this study shows, the intellectual and developmental disability policy, advocacy, and research communities are fortunate to have easy access to a number of data sources to monitor employment progress and to build a case for more effective employment supports and services. In doing so, users of these data sources have a responsibility to use the existing data accurately. This requires an understanding of the data,

Table 2: State Employment Outcomes by Data Source

State	National Core Indicators: Consumer Survey (NCI) (2010-2011)			ICI National Survey of Day and Employment Services (FY 2010)		
	Community Job	N	State Rank	Integrated Employment	N	State Rank
AK	-	-	-	28%	1,360	11
AL	3%	500	15	5%	4,966	41
AR	7%	379	14	-	-	-
AZ	-	-	-	-	-	-
CA	-	-	-	15%	74,273	29
CO	-	-	-	25%	5,357	12
CT	-	-	-	53%	9,287	3
DC	-	-	-	-	-	-
DE	-	-	-	-	-	-
FL	13%	1,232	7	15%	21,507	29
GA	15%	474	5	40%	6,661	5
HI	-	-	-	7%	1,499	37
IA	-	-	-	21%	8,950	20
ID	-	-	-	-	-	-
IL	8%	350	13	10%	26,280	36
IN	-	-	-	23%	10,614	17
KS	-	-	-	15%	6,217	29
KY	9%	478	11	11%	8,668	34
LA	13%	363	7	33%	4,563	9
MA	-	-	-	25%	14,039	12
MD	-	-	-	39%	11,476	6
ME	28%	365	3	25%	14,039	12
MI	-	-	-	24%	17,042	16
MN	-	-	-	18%	13,546	26
MO	9%	526	11	7%	5,038	37
MS	-	-	-	-	-	-
MT	-	-	-	11%	1,789	34
NC	14%	857	6	17%	17,908	27
ND	-	-	-	-	-	-
NE	-	-	-	6%	3,785	40
NH	36%	396	2	51%	2,366	4
NJ	-	-	-	14%	9,130	32
NM	-	-	-	37%	3,243	7
NV	-	-	-	20%	2,060	22
NY	18%	329	4	13%	67,770	33
OH	11%	434	10	22%	-	19
OK	45%	406	1	61%	4,079	2
OR	-	-	-	25%	10,025	12
PA	13%	1,133	7	-	-	-
RI	-	-	-	-	-	-
SC	-	-	-	31%	7,435	10
SD	-	-	-	19%	2,325	24
TN	-	-	-	16%	7,789	28
TX	-	-	-	7%	44,053	37
UT	-	-	-	23%	2,796	17
VA	-	-	-	21%	11,574	20
VT	-	-	-	37%	2,561	7
WA	-	-	-	89%	8,271	1
WI	-	-	-	20%	13,702	22
WV	-	-	-	-	-	-
WY	-	-	-	19%	1,468	24

Sources: Human Services Research Institute & The National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services, 2012; Institute for Community Inclusion, n.d.; Erickson, Lee, & von Schrader, 2012.

Table 2: State Employment Outcomes by Data Source (continued)

State	Rehabilitation Services Administrative Case Service Report (RSA-911) (FY 2010)			American Community Survey: Cognitive Disability (2010)			
	Rehabilitation Rate	N	State Rank	Employment Rate	Margin of Error (90%)	N	State Rank
AK	67%	36	8	33.3%	2.09	144	6
AL	21%	3,013	51	18.0%	2.09	1,694	47
AR	42%	199	43	20.6%	2.95	1,035	42
AZ	44%	154	41	22.8%	7.66	1,455	34
CA	51%	2,801	29	21.6%	1.07	7,268	39
CO	71%	276	4	30.8%	3.09	1,080	11
CT	45%	137	40	27.5%	3.64	707	16
DC	56%	75	21	22.3%	6.99	158	36
DE	76%	160	1	27.8%	6.17	233	15
FL	34%	1,075	50	20.6%	1.35	4,524	42
GA	53%	1,266	25	19.6%	1.85	2,407	46
HI	46%	81	38	32.7%	6.67	258	7
IA	51%	512	29	35.8%	3.78	631	4
ID	60%	226	16	25.8%	4.57	435	21
IL	55%	1,018	22	23.0%	1.92	2,523	32
IN	52%	981	27	22.4%	2.21	1,853	35
KS	36%	479	49	33.5%	3.93	678	5
KY	61%	569	14	17.3%	2.04	1,711	49
LA	39%	352	48	24.9%	2.48	1,523	25
MA	60%	288	16	22.9%	2.36	1,553	33
MD	71%	383	4	26.3%	2.98	1,109	19
ME	59%	136	18	17.3%	2.04	435	49
MI	43%	1,004	42	21.5%	1.70	2,971	40
MN	51%	398	29	37.4%	3.11	1,091	3
MO	66%	1,214	9	23.8%	2.24	1,846	30
MS	46%	418	38	19.9%	2.72	1,060	45
MT	52%	121	27	30.5%	6.90	188	12
NC	57%	3,003	20	21.2%	1.78	2,724	41
ND	73%	124	3	41.2%	9.90	116	1
NE	61%	187	14	26.8%	5.00	366	17
NH	63%	99	12	25.4%	5.36	306	23
NJ	50%	386	34	26.6%	2.53	1,539	18
NM	53%	179	25	22.1%	3.84	562	37
NV	68%	59	6	25.3%	4.20	531	24
NY	42%	2,296	43	21.9%	1.49	3,981	38
OH	42%	1,027	43	24.2%	1.66	3,348	28
OK	54%	335	23	28.6%	2.90	1,279	14
OR	48%	218	35	24.1%	2.69	1,162	29
PA	47%	1,451	37	24.6%	1.60	3,417	27
RI	42%	142	43	24.7%	5.14	316	26
SC	41%	422	47	20.1%	2.37	1,476	44
SD	68%	204	6	30.1%	7.99	131	13
TN	48%	775	35	17.9%	1.85	2,272	48
TX	51%	1,120	29	25.7%	1.29	5,712	22
UT	64%	184	11	31.6%	4.45	568	9
VA	51%	1,180	29	23.6%	2.31	1,705	31
VT	75%	231	2	32.0%	6.71	1,705	8
WA	62%	590	13	26.2%	2.40	1,650	20
WI	54%	586	23	31.1%	2.77	1,168	10
WV	66%	245	9	16.5%	2.78	765	51
WY	58%	84	19	40.5%	8.38	132	2

including the purpose and scope of the data sets, different definitions of the employment outcome, and the target populations.

Users also need to recognize the limitations of the data sources. It is known that many people with intellectual and developmental disabilities do not receive formal supports through a government agency, and as a result, they are not counted in much of the employment data. The *NCI*, *ICI National Survey of Day and Employment Services*, and *RSA-911* data only report outcomes for people receiving services and supports. It is inappropriate to suggest the employment outcomes of these data sources represent a statewide employment rate for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The *ACS* does attempt to provide state employment rates by reporting population estimates, but this data must be interpreted with caution because the definition of cognitive disability is not the same as intellectual and developmental disability, the sample size of some states is small, and the margin of error in some state estimates is high.

This state assessment shows that employment outcomes vary widely across the country. Together, these data sources offer states a more comprehensive picture about the service delivery systems and employment rate of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. This information can be an overview for states as they develop, implement, and monitor policy and practice strategies. The data allow for state-by-state comparisons.

Finally, it is necessary to recognize that the employment rate across the various data sources is a narrow view of a large issue. Merely having a job does not mean that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities work enough hours, earn enough in wages, or perform the type of work they want. As the advocacy, policy, and research communities look to broad indicators to support better employment opportunities, they must remember the importance of employment and quality support services.

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