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# Massachusetts Employment and Disability Snapshot Report, 2000-2004 (Report 1)

## Research Report

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Suggested audiences:

- [New England](#),
- [Policymakers](#) &
- [People with disabilities & family members](#)

## What Is This Report?

This is the first in an annual series of snapshot reports on the employment of people with disabilities in Massachusetts developed by the Medicaid Infrastructure and Comprehensive Employment Opportunities grant. It is intended to provide people with disabilities, advocates, policymakers, researchers, and other interested parties an overview of the status and trends in employment of people with disabilities.

The report includes information on the employment of people with disabilities overall in Massachusetts as well as data on particular populations of people with disabilities: MassHealth (Medicaid) members and people receiving disability services from the Department of Mental Retardation, the Department of Mental Health, the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, or the Commission for the Blind. Data are also provided on services to people with disabilities through One-Stop Career Centers, which constitute the workforce development system for the general population.

The snapshot is intended to provide an overall view of the "state of the state" and should not be used for comparison across agencies. Since every agency has a distinct population, mission, budget, and data collection mechanism, employment placement rates are not directly comparable.

## Why Report These Data?

As the data in this report show, the unemployment and underemployment of people with disabilities is a significant issue in Massachusetts, as it is throughout the United States. The employment rate of people with disabilities is less than half that of people without disabilities, despite the fact that many people with disabilities want to work.

## How Is "Employment" Defined in This Report?

Each agency has its own definition of "employment," so the definition may vary slightly across data sets. In general, however, we defined "employment" as working for pay in an individual, community-based job where the individual is paid directly by the employer.

## **How Do These Data Relate to the Massachusetts Economy as a Whole?**

The data reported here are for 2000-2004, which were difficult years for the Massachusetts economy. The state and nation were in a recession during this time period, with the unemployment rate in Massachusetts more than doubling (from 2.6% to 5.8%) between 2000 and 2003.

Moreover, due to the state of the economy, the state and national government made budget cuts during this time period. Those budget cuts affected some of these agencies and may be reflected in reductions in both numbers served and outcomes.

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### **Employment Rate for Massachusetts, 2000-2003**

Overall, employment in Massachusetts declined in the early 2000s. From 2000-2003 (the year of the latest Census data collection), the percentage of working-age adults employed dropped from 77% to 73%. This decline reflects the economic recession taking place in this time period both statewide and nationally.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

### **Employment Participation of People with Disabilities**

The employment rate for people with disabilities is considerably lower than the rate for the general population. In 2003, 36% of people with disabilities were employed, compared to 73% of all working-age adults. Incomes were also lower for people with disabilities: In 2003, 23% of working-age adults with disabilities had incomes at or below poverty level, compared to 7% of working-age adults without disabilities.

\* Part of the drop in employment rate from 2002-2003 was due to a change in survey wording. The 2003 version of the survey is considered more accurate; employment participation may have been overestimated in 2000-2002.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

### **Employment Rate of MassHealth Members**

In 2003, 17% of MassHealth members with disabilities were employed. Among those who were working, nearly 80% earned less than \$20,000 per year.

Source: Center for Health Policy Research, 2003 MassHealth Employment and Disability Survey

### **People with Disabilities Entering Employment with Services from One-Stop Career Centers**

One-Stop Career Centers, which provide services to job seekers in the general population, reported that 1382 customers with disabilities entered employment in FY04. This figure includes only those who self-reported a disability.

Source: Massachusetts One-Stop Career Center Activity Report (OSCCAR)

## **Number Entering Competitive Employment: Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission**

In fiscal year 2004, approximately 3000 people with severe disabilities entered competitive employment and stayed employed for a minimum of 90 days after receiving services from MRC under the state/federal vocational rehabilitation program. On average, people who became employed worked 29 hours per week and earned \$11.37 per hour. In addition, 185 individuals in the state-funded Community-Based Employment Services program became employed in individual competitive jobs, and another 190 individuals in competitive jobs received ongoing supports from the same program.

Source: Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission

## **Number Entering Competitive Employment: Massachusetts Commission for the Blind**

In fiscal year 2003, 104 individuals entered competitive employment and stayed employed for a minimum of 90 days after receiving services from MCB under the state/federal vocational rehabilitation program. On average, people who obtained competitive employment worked 31 hours per week and earned \$10.96 per hour.

Source: RSA 911 database

## **Number in Individual Integrated Employment: Department of Mental Health**

In fiscal year 2004, the Department of Mental Health provided services to 2691 people working in individual integrated employment: 875 in Services for Education and Employment (SEE), 1768 through Clubhouses, and 48 in the Employment Connections program for homeless individuals. People in the SEE program worked an average of 18 hours per week and earned an average of \$7.41 per hour.

Sources: Department of Mental Health SEEIS, DMH FY04 Employment Summary, Clubhouse Coalition FY04 Employment Statistics

## **Number in Individual Integrated Employment: Department of Mental Retardation**

In fiscal year 2004, DMR supported 1562 individuals in individual integrated employment. People in integrated employment worked an average of 55 hours per month and earned an average of \$7.34 per hour.

Source: Department of Mental Retardation

# What Is the Massachusetts Medicaid Infrastructure and Comprehensive Employment Opportunities Grant?

The Massachusetts Medicaid Infrastructure and Comprehensive Employment Opportunities grant (MI-CEO) is a collaborative project of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services, the Institute for Community Inclusion at UMass Boston, and the Center for Health Policy and Research at UMass Medical School aimed at improving employment outcomes for people with disabilities. The grant is funded by the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CFDA #93-768). One of the goals of the project is to increase the availability of useful information to policymakers, advocates, and anyone working to improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities in Massachusetts.

## About This Report

This report was developed by the Institute for Community Inclusion with input from the Center for Health Policy and Research; an ad hoc advisory group of consumer advocates chaired by Charlie Carr, executive director of the Northeast Independent Living Program; and the MICEO leadership team.

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