Federal and State Inclusive Apprenticeship Policies
Opportunities and Challenges

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As the Registered Apprenticeship job training model expands in the United States, policymakers are turning their attention to ensuring that apprenticeships are accessible to historically underrepresented populations, including people with disabilities (box 1). A range of federal and state laws and policies support inclusive apprenticeship, but ultimate responsibility for implementing apprenticeship programs resides with sponsors. As a result, it is imperative that sponsors understand these laws and policies and their responsibilities under them.

BOX 1

Research to Support Partnership on Inclusive Apprenticeship Project

The US Department of Labor (DOL) set an aspirational goal that at least 7 percent of apprentices in registered apprenticeship programs should be qualified people with disabilities. To build evidence about inclusive apprenticeship opportunities throughout the United States, the DOL Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) contracted with the Urban Institute, a nonprofit research organization, to

- document different models of inclusive apprenticeship planned or implemented,
- describe how apprenticeship programs are designed to be inclusive of people with disabilities, and
- learn what advice, resources, and assistance employers need to develop and maintain inclusive apprenticeship programs.

Notes: The Partnership on Inclusive Apprenticeship Project (PIA) began in 2020 and will continue through 2024.

This brief summarizes federal and state policies that support inclusive apprenticeship for people with disabilities. It further discusses inclusive apprenticeship policy implementation challenges, including barriers to self-identification of disability status, limited knowledge of job and training accommodations, and the lack of clarity about the differences between inclusion and nondiscrimination practices. Finally, it presents two different approaches used by state agencies to make apprenticeship more inclusive, followed by conclusions and policy implications.

Registered Apprenticeship Programs in the US for People with Disabilities

Registered Apprenticeship Programs provide on-the-job learning (OJL) and related instruction (RI) in a specific occupation and allow individuals to develop occupational skills that are recognized and transferrable across employers. Apprentices are employed during their training; they contribute to production, earn progressively higher wages, and receive an industry-recognized credential upon completion.[1] Registered Apprenticeships adhere to guidelines for the length of OJL and RI and meet other standards for registration set forth in 29 C.F.R. part 29 and registered by either DOL's Office of Apprenticeship (OA) or a federally recognized State Apprenticeship Agency (SAA) (box 2).[2]

In the United States, Registered Apprenticeship is expanding rapidly, with the annual number of new registered apprentices almost doubling to 278,343 between 2013 and 2023.[3] Registered Apprenticeship programs have positive outcomes for both apprentices (e.g., wage growth) and employers (e.g., positive returns on investment, reduced turnover) (Walton et al. 2022; Kuehn et al. 2022). Because of Registered Apprenticeship's promise as a workforce training model, DOL supports efforts to expand it to both new industries (beyond construction and the traditional trades) and populations traditionally underrepresented in apprenticeships, including people with disabilities.[4] In support of this, ODEP coordinates with OA and other DOL offices, including the Veterans' Employment

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[1] "Discover Apprenticeship," US Department of Labor, 2020 (updated),
   https://www.apprenticeship.gov/sites/default/files/Apprenticeship_Fact_Sheet.pdf.

[2]   25 states and territories register programs through the DOL Office of Apprenticeship, and 32 states, territories, and the District of Columbia register programs through their State Apprenticeship Agencies. For more information, go to https://www.apprenticeship.gov/about-us/apprenticeship-system.

[3] "ApprenticeshipUSA," https://www.apprenticeship.gov/data-and-statistics/, accessed November 13, 2023.

[4]   For example, the American Apprenticeship Initiative, launched in 2015, provided $175 million in five-year grants to increase apprenticeships in nontraditional industries and to underrepresented populations. See: https://www.apprenticeship.gov/sites/default/files/aai-background-document-final_0.pdf.

and Training Service, to promote and increase rates of voluntary self-identification of disability by Registered Apprenticeship program applicants and current apprentices.

Inclusive apprenticeship programs have all elements of Registered Apprenticeship programs but are intentionally designed to support access and completion by apprentices with disabilities and other diverse, underrepresented populations. For example, RI providers can use inclusive practices such as Universal Design for Learning, a teaching approach that accommodates the needs and abilities of all learners, thus eliminating barriers in the learning process.[5] Inclusive OJL design includes accessible workplace technology and accommodations (e.g., modified work schedules, accessible or modified equipment, worksite adjustments).[6]

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[5] "Universal Design for Learning, "Cornell University Center for Teaching Innovation, Cornell University, accessed November 15, 2023, https://teaching.cornell.edu/teaching-resources/designing-your-course/universal-design-learning/.

[6] "Partnership on Inclusive Apprenticeship (PIA), Office of Disability Employment Policy, US Department of Labor, accessed October 4, 2023, https://inclusiveapprenticeship.org/guide/.

Elements of Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAP)

- Approval by Office of Apprenticeship (OA) or a State Apprenticeship Agency (SAA), or sometimes both

- Standards of Apprenticeship that contains the work process schedule, the on-the-job learning, RI, and apprentice wage progression requirements for the RAP, and other regulatory requirements for registered apprenticeship programs

- On-the-job learning (OJL) of at least 2,000 hours overseen by a mentor at the employer's job site

- Related instruction (RI) at least 144 hours for each year of apprenticeship in a physical or virtual classroom

- Wage increases over the course of the apprenticeship (wage progression), which can be tied to time in the program or to demonstration of skill competency

- Work process schedule that outlines the major job functions, competencies, and/or hours an apprentice completes in a RAP

- An industry-recognized credential upon completion of the apprenticeship

- A sponsor to oversee the program and maintain fidelity to the Standards of Apprenticeship and collect basic data on apprentices; sponsors can be employers, consortia of employers, unions, community colleges, state or local workforce agencies, or nonprofits

- A written apprenticeship agreement between an apprentice and either the program sponsor or an apprenticeship committee acting as an agent for the sponsor

Source: Title 29 Code of Federal Regulations Part 29; Karen Gardiner, Daniel Kuehn, Elizabeth Copson, and Andrew Clarkwest, *Expanding Registered Apprenticeship in the United States: Description of American Apprenticeship Initiative Grantees and Their Programs.* Report prepared for the US Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (Rockville, MD: Abt Associates; and Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2021), https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/research/publications/expanding-registered-apprenticeship-united-states-description/.

Federal and State Legislation, Regulations, Supports, and Policies Governing Workforce Disability Inclusion

At the federal level, the primary disability nondiscrimination law is the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). Title I of the ADA addresses employment. Specifically, employers with 15 or more employees, including state and local governments, must provide people with disabilities equal opportunity to benefit from employment-related opportunities available to others.[7] Under the ADA,

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[7] "Introduction to the Americans with Disability Act, "ADA.gov, US Department of Justice, accessed October 4, 2023, https://www.ada.gov/topics/intro-to-ada/.

applicants and employees with disabilities also have the right to request reasonable accommodations during the hiring process and on the job.[8] The ADA requires reasonable accommodations that

- ensure equal opportunity in the application process;
- enable a qualified individual with a disability to perform the essential functions of a job, and
- make it possible for an employee with a disability to enjoy equal benefits and privileges of employment.[9]

Specific to apprenticeship, the National Apprenticeship Act of 1937 includes Equal Employment Opportunity regulations that were modernized in 2016 to prohibit discrimination based on disability, as well as race, color, religion, national origin, sex (including pregnancy and gender identity), sexual orientation, age (40 or older), and genetic information.[10] These regulations also specify that sponsors must provide reasonable accommodations to people with disabilities. In addition, sponsors with five or more apprentices must invite all applicants and apprentices to voluntarily disclose whether they have a disability using a standard Voluntary Disclosure Form.[11, 12]

In addition to the legislation and regulations that govern the workplace, the federal government funds several efforts to promote inclusive apprenticeship (box 3). These initiatives include grants to state government agencies, such as state departments of labor, as well as community colleges, community-based organizations, local workforce service providers, and other entities focused on apprenticeship expansion at the regional or local level.

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[8] "A Guide to People with Disabilities Seeking Employment," ADA.gov, US Department of Justice, accessed October 23, 2023, https://www.ada.gov/resources/employment-seeking-guide/. Last updated February 25, 2020.

[9] "Accommodations," Office of Disability Employment Policy, US Department of Labor, https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/program-areas/employers/accommodations/.

[10] "Part 30-Equal Employment Opportunity in Apprenticeship," https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-29/subtitle-A/part-30/.

[11] "Voluntary Disclosure Form," US Department of Labor, https://www.apprenticeship.gov/sites/default/files/Disability_Disclosure_form-671.pdf.

[12] "Disability," ApprenticeshipUSA, accessed October 9, 2023, https://www.apprenticeship.gov/eeo/protected-characteristics/disability.

Federal Inclusive Apprenticeship Grant Initiatives

Apprenticeship Inclusion Models (AIM)

The Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) funded the Apprenticeship Inclusion Models (AIM) Demonstration Project to research and test strategies for making Registered Apprenticeship programs more accessible to youth and adults with disabilities by developing and testing new recruitment and retention strategies.[a]

Partnership on Inclusive Apprenticeship (PIA)

ODEP launched the Partnership on Inclusive Apprenticeship (PIA)[b] to partner with industry intermediaries to enhance and improve inclusive apprenticeship programs that promote access for people with disabilities. Partnership on inclusive apprenticeship builds on the AIM pilot by providing focused technical assistance, developing targeted resources, and fostering resource development.

Other Grant Programs

In 2020, DOL awarded $81 million in grants to states and territories to expand and enhance Registered Apprenticeship through the Building State Capacity to Expand Apprenticeship through Innovation grant program.[c] A specific goal of the grants was to support inclusion of underrepresented groups in apprenticeship, including women, people of color, and people with disabilities. Several states are using these funds to support apprenticeship for people with disabilities.[d] As another example, DOL awarded "American Apprenticeship Initiative" grants in 2015 to expand Registered Apprenticeship to populations traditionally underrepresented, including people with disabilities.[e]

[a] "Apprenticeship Inclusion Models," Apprenticeship Inclusion Models (AIM) Demonstration Project, ODEP, DOL, https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/program-areas/individuals/youth/inclusive-apprenticeship/.
[b] Partnership on Inclusive Apprenticeship, ODEP, DOL, https://inclusiveapprenticeship.org/
[c] "Building State Capacity to Expand Apprenticeship through Innovation," ApprenticeshipUSA, https://www.apprenticeship.gov/investments-tax-credits-and-tuition-support/building-state-capacity-expand-apprenticeship-through/
[d] Daniel Kuehn, John Marotta, Bhavani Arabandi, and Batia Katz, *Inclusive Apprenticeship: A Summary of What We Know about Apprentices with Disabilities* (Washington DC: Urban Institute, 2021), https://www.urban.org/research/publication/inclusive-apprenticeship/.
[e] Karen Gardiner, Daniel Kuehn, Elizabeth Copson, and Andrew Clarkwest, *Expanding Registered Apprenticeship in the United States: Description of American Apprenticeship Initiative Grantees and Their Programs,* Report prepared for the US Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, (Rockville, MD: Abt Associates; and Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2021), https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/research/publications/expanding-registered-apprenticeship-united-states-description/.

States also promote disability-inclusive apprenticeship. For example, a 2019 California law created a subcommittee within the state's Interagency Advisory Committee on Apprenticeship (IACA) to expand apprenticeship for individuals with disabilities (box 4). In Vermont, a 2023 law expanded the state's apprenticeship program framework to ensure inclusion of underrepresented populations,

including people with disabilities. The law now ensures that the Vermont Department of Labor and other workforce partners, such as the state's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired, provide necessary technical assistance and support to apprenticeship sponsors. The law also increases emphasis on accessibility and accommodations to promote equal access to employment opportunities.[13]

California Law Aims to Increase Participation of People with Disabilities in Apprenticeship

The Interagency Advisory Committee on Apprenticeship (IACA) in California's Department of Industrial Relations Division of Apprenticeship Standards provides advice and guidance on key apprenticeship components, including standards and agreements, for nontraditional Registered Apprenticeship programs that the state registers through the federal Office of Apprenticeship (i.e., programs not in construction or fire prevention). The law added the director of vocational rehabilitation and executive director of the State Council on Developmental Disabilities to the advisory committee and required IACA to create a subcommittee to address increasing apprenticeship opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

Source: "AB-1019 Apprenticeship: developmentally disabled persons," California 2019-2020 Leg., Reg. Sess. (2019), https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200AB1019.

Other state policies also support inclusive apprenticeship. According to the Council of State Governments (table 1), the two most prevalent policies relevant to inclusive apprenticeship are those that position the state government as a model employer of people with disabilities (21 states) or establish pre-apprenticeship programs (18 states). Less commonly, states offer tax incentives to employers to hire people with disabilities (6 states). A few states set goals for diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) or agency collaboration (3 states), for data collection and digital platform accessibility (2 states), or for elimination of barriers to success (1 state). These policies are independent of processes or decisions to register an apprenticeship program.

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[13] H. 452, Act 55, Gen. Assembly, 2023-2024 (Vt. 2023), https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2024/Docs/ACTS/ACT055/ACT055%20As%20Enacted.pdf.

TABLE 1

State Policies Relevant to Inclusive Apprenticeship, 2021

Policy Area	States with Relevant Policies	Goal
State government as a model employer of people with disabilities	AK, AZ, CA, CO, CT, DE, IL, KS, LA, MA, ME, MN, MO, MT, NM, NY, OH, OK, UT, VT, WA	Committing states to serving as model employers by recruiting people with disabilities to state jobs and offering work-based learning opportunities for people with disabilities
Pre-apprenticeships	AL, CA, CT, FL, HI, ID, MI, MT, NC, OH, OR, PA, RI, SC, TN, TX, WA, WI	Providing skills for and entry into apprenticeships for people with disabilities who may have barriers to employment
Tax incentives	DE, IA, LA, MD, NY, TN	Incentivizing employers to hire people with disabilities by allowing them to claim a tax credit
DEIA requirements	IA, MA, OH	Setting goals and requirements for DEIA and developing plans to engage and retain individuals from diverse populations in the workforce
Agency collaboration	CA, OH, VA	Encouraging collaboration between workforce and disability-focused agencies to expand inclusive apprenticeship
Data collection	DE, MO	Collecting and analyzing disability inclusion data for apprenticeship programs
Digital platform accessibility	MS, SC	Offering virtual apprenticeship options to increase access for people with disabilities
Eliminating barriers to success	NJ	Creating or funding programs that remove barriers to participating in apprenticeships, such as transportation, childcare, and housing

Sources: "Apprenticeships," Disability Employment Policy, The Council of State Governments, 2023; https://seed.csg.org/policy-curricula/apprenticeships/; "Students Explore Apprenticeship, Industry Career Options," San Jacinto College, July 26, 2022, https://www.sanjac.edu/about/news/2022/students-explore-apprenticeship-industry-career-options ; Interview with Virginia DARS director of workforce programs (February 15, 2023).

The Council of State Governments also provides a framework that categorizes these and other inclusive apprenticeship state policies and practices into four areas aligned with the apprenticeship lifecycle: developing apprenticeships, preparing apprentices, hiring apprentices, and supporting apprentices on the job.[14]

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[14] Elise Gurney, "Inclusive Apprenticeships: How States are Supporting Skills Training for People with Disabilities," Disability Employment Policy, The Council of State Governments, January 11, 2021, https://seed.csg.org/inclusive-apprenticeships-how-states-are-supporting-skills-training-for-people-with-disabilities/; "Apprenticeships," Disability Employment Policy, The Council of State Governments, accessed November 3, 2023, https://seed.csg.org/policy-curriculum/apprenticeships/.

Developing Apprenticeships

State policies that aim to develop apprenticeships typically involve efforts to facilitate inclusive apprenticeship planning by partnering with individuals with disabilities and agencies that support them. For example, Wisconsin's Bureau of Apprenticeship Standards works on apprenticeship grant funding applications in collaboration with the state's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.[15] These policies help ensure that inclusion is built into Registered Apprenticeship programs from the beginning. Box 5 highlights examples of two other state agencies' approaches, and challenges to, developing inclusive apprenticeships.

BOX 5

Massachusetts and Virginia Develop Inclusive Apprenticeships

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act requires the federal government to make electronic and information technology resources accessible to people with disabilities. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires state and local governments and businesses open to the public to ensure their websites are accessible to people with disabilities. Workers who can make websites compliant with Section 508 and the ADA are in tremendous demand, but there are not enough people trained to do so. The Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB) designed two programs to train people with limited/low vision and blindness to become web content and accessibility specialists (WCAS) or Internet and document accessibility specialists (IDAS). Because WCAS and IDAS are not in the government's Standard Occupational Classification system, the MCB needed to build the work process schedule for each program, which necessitated identifying design experts who understood both apprenticeship and disability policy.[a]

The Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) also designed a new Peer Recovery Specialist apprenticeship program. Because regulations require Peer Recovery Specialists to have at least 500 hours of unpaid work before they can bill for services, DARS could not pay apprentices. Instead, DARS engaged a temporary staffing agency that hires apprentices for the on-the-job learning (OJL) component and pays them.

[a] The individual who developed the apprenticeships is no longer at MCB. The programs are not yet registered per the Massachusetts apprenticeship website. MCB did not respond to the project team's efforts to determine the status of these programs. Interviews with the MCB commissioner (October 14, 2022) and DARS director of workforce programs (February 15, 2023).

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[15] "Wisconsin Apprenticeship: A Different Kind of Classroom," Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, accessed October 8, 2023, https://dwd.wisconsin.gov/apprenticeship/.

Preparing Apprentices

State policies related to apprenticeships can increase awareness of the need to provide people with disabilities access, which includes helping them prepare to enter Registered Apprenticeship programs. For example, California[16] and other states encourage people with disabilities to enroll in pre-apprenticeships. Other states have piloted programs to help people with disabilities develop skills for apprenticeships. The Texas Workforce Commission, for instance, piloted a pre-apprenticeship program in 2019 and 2023 that was open only to students with disabilities.[17]

Hiring Apprentices

State policies incentivize employers to hire people with disabilities. For example, Tennessee, New York, Iowa, Louisiana, Delaware, and Maryland allow employers who hire people with disabilities to claim a tax credit.[18] Ohio's Vocational Apprenticeship Program helps people with disabilities apply and interview for unregistered apprenticeship positions.[19]

Supporting Apprentices

Finally, some state policies aim to support apprentices with disabilities once they are hired. For example, the Michigan House of Representatives introduced a bill to establish a peer mentoring

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[16] A.B. 1019, 2019–2020 Leg., Reg. Sess. (Ca. 2019), https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200AB1019.

[17] " "Students Explore Apprenticeship, Industry Career Options," San Jacinto College, July 26, 2022, https://www.sanjac.edu/about/news/2022/students-explore-apprenticeship-industry-career-options.

[18] "Job Tax Credit for Employing Persons with Disabilities," Tennessee Code Title 67, 2021, accessed October 1, 2023, http://employmentincentives.com/state_incentives/documents/Tennessee/jobtaxcredit.pdf; "Work Opportunity Tax Credit," Hiring Incentives, Tax Credits, and Funding Opportunities, New York State Department of Labor, accessed October 1, 2023, https://dol.ny.gov/hiring-incentives-tax-credits-and-funding-opportunities/; "Income Tax Benefits for Iowa Employers Who Hire Persons with Disabilities," Iowa Department of Revenue, Administrative Code 302.21, accessed September 22, 2023, https://tax.iowa.gov/income-tax-benefit-iowa-employers-who-hire-persons-disabilities/; "What's New for Louisiana 2015 Individual Income Tax?" Louisiana Department of Revenue, https://revenue.louisiana.gov/VendorForms/IT540i(2015).pdf; "Income, Inheritance and Estate Taxes," Delaware Code Title 30 Chapter 20B, The Delaware Code Online, accessed September 22, 2023, https://delcode.delaware.gov/title30/c020b/index.html#20B-100 ; "Maryland Disability Employment Tax Credit-Workforce Development & Adult Learning," Maryland Department of Labor, Maryland.gov, accessed September 22, 2023, https://www.dllr.state.md.us/employment/mdetc.shtml/.

[19] "Ohio Vocational Apprentice Program," Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities, February 6, 2020, https://ood.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/ood/about-us/programs-and-partnerships/ohio-vocational-apprentice-program/.

program for apprentices with disabilities.[20] Other policies that subsidize transportation and childcare, such as New Jersey's Apprentice Assistance and Support Services Pilot, aim to remove barriers that can hinder people with disabilities from participating in apprenticeships.[21] Box 6 highlights one state's efforts to connect applicants and apprentices to supports, even if the individuals do not formally self-identify as having a disability.

BOX 6

Virginia Vocational Rehabilitation and State Apprenticeship Agencies Collaborate to Build on the Self-Identification Process

The staff of the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) Workforce Development Program added information about available vocational rehabilitation services to DOL's Voluntary Disability Disclosure form. Because Virginia registers programs through a State Apprenticeship Agency (SAA), it has flexibility to add content to the form. The voluntary form now includes information about how to access vocational rehabilitation services, including accommodations, as needed. To support program retention, DARS' Quick Response counselors also provide disabled apprentices with "just-in-time" services, such as extra tutoring for related instruction, universal design accommodations, and transportation assistance, when needed. In addition, these counselors are trained in special education and can help employers and instructors better accommodate apprentices' needs.

Source: Interview with DARS director of workforce programs (February 15, 2023).

Implementation Challenges

Challenges to implementing inclusive apprenticeship laws and policies include lack of clarity about the difference between nondiscrimination and inclusivity, employers' lack of knowledge about workplace accommodations, and limited disclosure of disability by applicants and apprentices. Each of these challenges is described below.

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[20] H B. 4579, 2021 Session (Mi. 2021), http://www.legislature.mi.gov/(S(omf3hfjsmqddqty4qbbhgp3k))/mileg.aspx?page=GetObject&objectname=2021-HB-4579.

[21] S.B. 3067, 2018-2019 Session (Nj. 2019), https://legiscan.com/NJ/bill/S3067/2018/.

Moving Beyond Nondiscrimination to Inclusivity

The ADA prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability, including in employment. Sponsors and employers, thus, might equate nondiscrimination with inclusivity. Inclusive practices further expand opportunities for people with disabilities by actively encouraging apprenticeship sponsors and employers to hire and retain people with disabilities—for example, by embedding inclusivity into each stage of the apprenticeship, from program design to job announcement and helping apprentices persist in and complete their programs. An example of inclusive practices is using Universal Design for Learning, an evidence-based framework for designing and implementing programs that addresses differences in learning styles, in RI.[22,23]

Knowledge of Accommodations

Employers might have a limited understanding of workplace accommodations, how to provide them, and how they vary based on the individual and their occupation. For instance, accommodations for jobs in construction-related occupations will likely differ from those in an office setting. Accommodations for individuals with physical disabilities likely differ from those needed by apprentices with cognitive disabilities. Given the individual nature of accommodations, employers might need technical assistance to navigate the process but, they might not know how to obtain it.

In addition, evidence suggests that employers have unfounded concerns about the costs of accommodations (Bonaccio et al. 2019; Kaye et al. 2011). The Job Accommodation Network's web-based survey of employers, administered between January 2019 and December 2022, found that employer concerns about the cost of accommodations generally were not supported. Of the 720 employers who reported cost information (about 20 percent of the sample), 49.4 percent reported accommodations to be no cost, and 43.3 percent reported a one-time cost with a median of $300. Among the 7.2 percent of employers who reported an annual cost, the median was $3,750.

Limited Disclosure of Disability

Sponsors of RAPs can adopt inclusive OJL and RI practices. However, they might be unaware of the number of apprentices with disabilities and their accommodation needs because disclosing a disability is voluntary for apprentices.

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[22] For more on Universal Design for Learning, go to https://teaching.cornell.edu/teaching-resources/designing-your-course/universal-design-learning.

[23] A companion brief focuses on employer adoption of inclusive apprenticeship.

Sponsors with five or more apprentices are required to invite applicants and apprentices to voluntarily self-identify as having a disability using a Voluntary Disclosure Form. The information on this form is kept confidential and separate from personnel files. It provides important information to the sponsor about the number of apprentices with disabilities. Without this information, sponsors cannot accurately assess the different populations of individuals with disabilities in their programs, and the types of services that can support their success.[24]

Conclusion

Various federal and state policies aim to support efforts to create inclusive apprenticeship or modify existing programs to be more inclusive. The ADA, the bedrock of nondiscrimination disability policy in the United States, requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations to people with disabilities. The regulations implementing the National Apprenticeship Act also prohibit discrimination and require sponsors with five or more apprentices to offer applicants and apprentices the opportunity to self-identify as having a disability. State policies promote inclusivity, which encourages employers to actively recruit, hire, retain, and advance workers, including apprentices, with disabilities.

Challenges to implementing inclusive programs do persist, though. Employers might equate nondiscrimination with inclusivity, and thus not actively recruit, hire, or retain apprentices with disabilities. The patchwork of state policies promoting inclusion means that opportunities for and experiences of apprentices with disabilities differ across states. Moreover, accommodations are contingent on apprentices disclosing a disability to their employer. Those with undisclosed disabilities potentially forgo accommodations that could help them succeed in their apprenticeship program. Practices to encourage more apprentices to both self-identify as having a disability and understand their right to request an accommodation and the process for doing so is an important area for future policy.

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[24] Sponsors and employers can also offer other opportunities for apprentices to self-identify using the Voluntary Disclosure Form once the hiring process is completed. Guidance to sponsors and employers from DOL indicates that they must provide such opportunities when the apprentice is hired but before they begin the program. Also, apprentices should be given the opportunity yearly to update their disability status. Encouraging apprentices to self-identify outside of the Voluntary Disclosure Form can help sponsors and employers determine the accommodations they can provide to support apprentice success. Disability Self-Identification: A Guide for Apprenticeship Sponsors.

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