

# The Impact of Competitive Integrated Employment on Economic, Psychological, and Physical Health Outcomes for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

## Overview

Although competitive integrated employment (CIE) has been established as a goal for employment research, policy, and practice for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, the secondary benefits of CIE are rarely discussed.

This review of the empirical literature examines the relationship between CIE and quality of life outcomes, including the economic, psychological, and physical effects of CIE on individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

## Main Findings

- Findings from this study indicate a strong association between CIE and economic outcomes.
- A moderate association was observed between CIE and psychological outcomes.
- Limited evidence regarding the association between CIE and physical health was reported within the literature. This is an area of need for future research.
- Overall, findings point to a number of benefits of CIE for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In light of these findings, more efforts to increase CIE outcomes and reduce unemployment, underemployment, and facility-based work participation are needed.

## Application of Findings

- The benefits of CIE extend beyond simply acquiring a job. Work offers opportunities for economic self-sufficiency and improved mental health. These additional benefits contribute to an overall higher quality of life.
- When discussing employment options with job seekers and their families, practitioners should discuss the collateral benefits of community employment to help guide informed decision-making.

- A known barrier to employment is a fear of losing benefits. Benefits counseling and planning can help individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities achieve economic gains through employment while still keeping their benefits. Practitioners need to make job seekers aware of this service.
- To further promote CIE outcomes, additional training is needed for employment service organizations in how to provide high-quality vocational interventions that are known to result in CIE, such as supported and customized employment.

## Future Directions

This review of the empirical literature was conducted to examine the secondary benefits of participating in competitive employment for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. While the research evidence clearly demonstrated an association between CIE and economic outcomes, and a moderate association between CIE and psychological outcomes, limited examination has been conducted to assess the benefits of CIE on health. Future research should investigate the impact of CIE on health and wellness. Overall, current research findings unilaterally support CIE as the primary employment goal for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities over segregated or non-work alternatives.

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