

RESOURCE DIRECTORY

Individuals with disabilities will not be full participating members of society until they can increase their personal savings and benefit from the power of asset accumulation. There are a number of strategies and incentives that are available to increase savings. This Resource Directory is a companion to a larger report (Assessing Opportunities for Asset Development and Self-Sufficiency Strategies for Individuals with Disabilities: The Nation and Iowa) with additional, detailed information. The full report along with a series of Helpful Hints can be found on the following website: www.healthcare.uiowa.edu/cdd/multiple/programs/employmentinitiatives.asp

In each section of this Directory, you will be given resources or contacts for more information on the given topic. Please contact the organization or individual listed or view the website provided to you for more information.

I. Employment Services

Clearly, having a job is one of the two main cornerstones for saving money and asset accumulation (the other main cornerstone is owning a home). Iowa has three systems that can assist an individual with a disability to find employment: Iowa Workforce Development; Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services and the community mental health/ mental retardation/ developmental disabilities/brain injury system (through local agencies coordinated through the local Central Points of Coordination (CPC).

In regard to obtaining employment, outside of assistance from family members, individuals with disabilities are heavily dependent upon human service professionals to help them obtain employment. In the past few years there has been an increased effort to increase the training of vocational providers in regard to customized employment, supported employment and self-employment for individuals with disabilities including significant disabilities. For information regarding training opportunities for service providers, please see the information contained

within the full report in Section A. - Employment-Related Supports and Services.

RESOURCES

1. Iowa Workforce Development- To find your local Workforce Development office or utilize their on-line service to view available jobs around the state go to: www.iowaworkforce.org or call 515-281-5387
2. Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services- To find your local VR office visit the state VR website at: www.ivrs.iowa.gov and click on Contact Us or call 515-281-4211.
3. Community mental health/mental retardation/developmental disabilities/ brain injury system-To find your local Central Point of Coordination in order to identify locally approved providers of vocational and employment services, go to the state website at www.dhs.iowa.gov/mhdd and click on CPC Administrators list.

II. Employment-Related Supports

A. Social Security Work Incentives

For too long, individuals with disabilities and their families as well as human service professionals have been afraid for a person with a disability to work. They all have been concerned that the individual will lose their government benefits including Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) as well as their health insurance through Medicaid or Medicare. However there are a number of work incentives offered by the Social Security Administration (SSA) which should put these fears to rest. *There no longer are virtually any reasons that an individual with a disability cannot work and still maintain some financial assistance and health insurance.*

Incentives and Resources

1. **Ticket to Work program**- this is a voluntary program which connects SSI or SSDI beneficiaries with employment service providers while providing a safety net to get back on benefits if employment efforts are unsuccessful. There are currently 11 Disability Navigators around the state who work with participants to obtain employment services at a One Stop Center or other community resource. To identify your regional Disability Navigator go to: www.iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov/access/navigators
2. **Iowa Work Incentives Planning Assistance (WIPA)** - Iowa WIPA has two Community Work Incentive Coordinators who serve to support individuals receiving SSI or SSDI in utilizing work incentives (see items 3-9 below) to become more self-sufficient and less dependent on Social Security benefits. To identify a Work Incentive Coordinator visit the following website: www.iowawipa.org
3. **Working and Keeping SSI [Section 1619(a)]**
An individual receiving SSI can receive SSI cash payments while they work. The SSI cash

payment will reduce by about half of gross earnings as the person's income increases. The individual will also continue to be eligible for Medicaid. The SSI cash payment will reduce to zero at about \$1,300 in gross monthly earnings. Visit or contact your local Social Security office, contact a Community Work Incentive Coordinator (see above) or visit the following website: www.ssa.gov/OP_Home/ssact/title16b/1619

3. **Working and Keeping Medicaid [Section 1619(b)]**
After a SSI beneficiary returns to work, Medicaid coverage can continue even if an individual's earnings become too high for a SSI cash payment. The individual must continue to have a qualifying disability and need the Medicaid coverage. A threshold has been established to determine the level of earnings that are high enough to replace the SSI and Medicaid benefits. The threshold amount for Iowa is currently \$30,688. The threshold amount in Iowa for an individual who is blind is currently \$31,216. *Even if an individual goes over the threshold, he/she would still be able to participate in the Medicaid Buy-In program (see later in this Directory) and continue to receive Medicaid by paying a sliding scale premium.* Contact information is the same as item 3 above.
4. **Plan to Achieve Self-Sufficiency (PASS)**
A PASS plan allows an SSI recipient to set aside income or resources for a specified period of time so the individual can pursue a work goal. For example an individual could set aside money to pay expenses for education, vocational training or starting a business. Social Security does not count the income set aside under PASS when they figure the SSI payment so therefore a PASS can help establish or maintain SSI eligibility and can increase the SSI payment amount. Contact a Community Work Incentive Coordinator, Disability Navigator or a Social Security office for more information or visit this website: www.socialsecurity.gov/disabilityresearch/wi/pass

5. **Property Essential to Self-Support (PESS)**

For an SSI recipient, Social Security does not count property if used in a trade or business or used for work as an employee regardless of the value or rate of return. Social Security also does not count the equity value of non-business property used to produce goods or services essential to daily activities as well as the equity value of non-business income-producing property. Contacts are the same as for item #4 or visit this website:

www.workworld.org/wwwwebhelp/property_essential_to_self_support_ssi

6. **Trial Work Period and Extended Period of Eligibility (SSDI Beneficiaries)**

A Trial Work Period allows an SSDI beneficiary to test his/her ability to work for at least 9 months. During the TWP, the beneficiary will receive full SSDI benefits regardless of how high the earnings might be as long as the individual continues to have a disabling impairment. During the 36 months following a TWP, Social Security may restart SSDI benefits for an individual without a new application, disability determination or waiting period. Contacts are the same as for item #4 or visit this website: www.ssa.gov/redbook/eng/ssdi

7. **Impairment-Related Work Expenses (IRWE)**

For SSI and SSDI beneficiaries, Social Security may deduct the cost of certain impairment-related items and services that an individual needs to work from their gross earnings when they determine the person's "countable earnings". Examples of deductible expenses include transportation costs, attendant care, medical devices, prosthesis, residential modifications, routine drugs, medical services, diagnostic procedures and some medical supplies. Contacts are the

same as for item #4 or visits this website: www.socialsecurity.gov/disabilityresearch/wi/detailedinfo

8. **Work Expenses for the Blind**

Earned income that an individual who is blind uses to meet work expenses does not count for SSI eligibility and payment amount. Acceptable expenses include paying income taxes, meals consumed during work hours, transportation costs or guide dog expenses. Contacts and website are the same as for item #7.

B. Medicaid Buy-In (Medicaid for Employed Persons with Disabilities- MEPD)

To be eligible for Iowa's Medicaid Buy-In program (MEPD), an individual must be under age 65, be disabled and have income from work or self-employment. An individual must have **monthly net family income** less than 250% of the federal poverty level for his/her family. An individual must also have countable assets that are less than \$12,000 for one person or \$13,000 for a couple (normally \$2,000 is the limit for one person). In addition, funds in retirement accounts, assistive technology accounts, and funds in an exempt medical savings account are assets which do not count for eligibility. An individual with a disability pays a small monthly premium when monthly **gross income** is above 150% of the federal poverty level. For example, if the monthly income of the person with a disability is less than \$1,300 or less, he/she pays no premium.

RESOURCES

1. Contact your local Department of Human Services office or ask your case manager or provider agency.
2. Visit the following website: www.ime.state.ia.us/HCBS/MEPDIndex.html

III.

Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)

A. (Federal) - Potential Tax Refund

Most individuals with disabilities, because they are poor, are eligible for an Earned Income Tax Credit. An individual must have some earned income (but it doesn't take much) and **must file a federal income tax return to determine eligibility even if they don't owe taxes.** If the tax credit exceeds the taxes owed, it results in a tax refund. Since most individuals with disabilities don't owe federal taxes, most of them can get a tax refund. This tax credit or refund is available each year through the federal tax return (form 1040A or 1040). IRS rules allows tax filers to have up to three years to file claims so an individual could go back several years and receive refunds for several years. (See tax filing assistance below in section B)

B. (Iowa) - Potential Tax Refund

Iowa also has an EITC equal to 7% of the federal tax credit and it is refundable. Thus, an individual with a disability can potentially get a federal tax refund and an Iowa tax refund each year. Again, the individual with a disability must have some income (sheltered work income would qualify) and must file an Iowa tax form.

RESOURCES for EITC

1. The website of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities offers an EITC Estimator: www.cbpp.org
2. There are now at least 45 county sites in Iowa covering 80 counties with free tax assistance sites. You can find a list of sites at: www.iowa.gov/government/ag/consumer/advisories/VITA or check with your local library.

IV.

Individual Development Account (IDA)-Matched Savings Accounts

Low income individuals, including individuals with disabilities, can save money and have their savings doubled by participating in a federal IDA program. The individual must open a savings account and commit to establishing a savings objective (higher education, purchasing a home or developing a small business) for a one to five year period. Most organizations working with the federal program have established a two year goal period. Fiscal education training is an integral part of the program and the organization will work closely with the participant to provide counseling. Participants can save as little as \$10 per month.

There are currently three operating programs in Iowa.

1. Iowans for Social and Economic Development (ISED), based in Des Moines, serves central Iowa. For more information about ISED's IDA program (Central Iowa Saves), call 515-283-0940 or check out their website at: www.isedventures.org
2. The Iowa Credit Union Foundation also operates an IDA program. Currently 10 credit unions in Iowa are getting geared up to implement the program covering Des Moines, Bettendorf, Cedar Falls, Ottumwa, Esterville, Cedar Rapids, Dubuque, Maquoketa, Waterloo and Decorah. The Credit Union Foundation will also allow the purchase of a vehicle for transportation to work as an acceptable goal for participant savings. For more information about their IDA program, contact them at 515-221-3001 or visit their website at: www.iowacreditunions.com and click on Community Outreach and then IDAs.
3. The third IDA program in Iowa is to be implemented by the United Way and Community Foundation of Northwest Iowa (Fort Dodge). For more information on their program, contact them at 515-573-3179.

V. Microenterprise Development / Self-Employment

A microenterprise is a business of five or fewer employees. For an individual with disabilities, a microenterprise may offer the freedom of flexible hours and match his/her interests with the production of income. A home based microenterprise may also eliminate challenges of the lack of available accessible transportation. Self-employment is not right for all workers and thus it is not right for all people with disabilities. Any individual seeking self-employment must have a certain temperament and must develop a business plan. However, for some individuals with disabilities, self-employment may be just the right fit.

There is no one strategy for development of a microenterprise. It takes the utilization of a number of strategies which were mentioned previously in this document (Individual Development Account, EITC, PASS plan and PESS, IWRE, Medicaid Buy-In, 1619 (a) or a Trial Work Period, etc.) In Iowa, there are primary sources for self-employment / microenterprise development for people with disabilities: Iowa Self-Employment program operated by Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services; the Abilities Fund and Iowans for Social and Economic Development. In addition, the Iowa Department of Economic Development has recently been given the green light to move forward with a community micro-enterprise development organization within IDED. IDED can award grants for business start-up, home based and self-employed businesses. A total of \$475,000 was appropriated for the program.

RESOURCES

1. Iowa Self-Employment (formerly Entrepreneurs with Disabilities) - Contact Vocational Rehabilitation at 515-281-4144 or visit the following website: www.ivrs.iowa.gov/clients/selfemploymentoptions
2. The Abilities Fund currently operates two programs directly related to microenterprise development and one with a tangential relationship: a) training and technical assistance to Disability Program Navigators; b) a Microloan program; and c) the Iowa Able Loan program. For more information regarding these programs, view their website at www.abilitiesfund.org or contact them at (toll free) 1-888-222-8943.
3. Iowans for Social and Economic Development (ISED)
ISED operates ISED Ventures- a microenterprise and asset development program targeted to populations typically underserved and most at risk, including low-income women, minorities, refugees, ex-offenders, non-custodial parents, persons below 200 of the federal poverty level and individuals with disabilities. For more information regarding ISED Ventures, visit their website at www.isedventures.org or call 515-283-0940.
4. Iowa Department of Economic Development- Contact Gail Kotval at 515-242-4731.

VI. Other Favorable Tax Provisions

A. Credit for the Elderly or Disabled

This federal tax credit is available to certain low-income individuals if they are at least age 65 or older and to individuals under age 65 if they are retired with a permanent and total disability and have taxable disability income from a public or private employer. For more information, contact an IRS office or visit this website www.irs.gov/formspubs/index.html Click on Publication #524

B. Child and Dependent Care Credit

If an individual paid someone for care for a child under age 13 or a qualifying dependent spouse, so he/she could work or look for work, he/she may be able to reduce his/her federal tax by claiming this credit on his/her federal tax return. The credit is a percentage of the amount of work-related child and dependent care expenses paid to a care provider. The credit can be up to 35 percent of the individual's qualifying expenses. For more information, contact an IRS office or visit this website: www.irs.gov/formspubs/index.html Click on Publication #503

C. Child Tax Credit

The Child Tax Credit is a federal \$1,000 per child tax benefit intended to defray some of the costs associated with raising children. This tax credit is partially refundable. Please note that a low to moderate income parent could get three federal tax credits- the Earned Income Tax Credit, the Child and Dependent Care Credit and the Child Tax Credit. For more information on the Child Tax Credit, contact an IRS office or visit this website: www.irs.gov/formspubs/index.html Click on Publication #972

VII. Financial Education/Financial Literacy

Financial education programs improve an individual's understanding and skill to create a budget, manage income, utilize a checking and savings account and effectively use credit. Possession of some or all of these skills is important for individuals with disabilities. When an individual with a disability is not able to directly benefit from financial education programs, their representative or broker can be involved on their behalf. As in most states, Iowa does not have a uniform, statewide program or initiative to teach financial literacy to students or adults with or without disabilities. Focused training does exist through the IDA program mentioned in section II above. Children with disabilities may receive some money management skills training through their Individual Education Plan. Some adults with disabilities may receive some training if they have a money management goal within their Individual Service Plan. There are a number of national curricula available to assist with financial education and financial literacy and some are listed below.

A recent positive development in Iowa was the passage of SF 2216. This legislation requires the development and implementation of a core curriculum for all students in school districts and accredited nonpublic schools. The core curriculum shall include learning skills which include but are not limited to civic literacy, health literacy, technology literacy, financial literacy and employability skills for kindergarten through grade 12. The core curriculum will be fully implemented by 2015. The State Board of Education will not require the schools to adopt a specific textbook or curriculum but rather specify learning objectives. Schools districts, with the assistance of the AEAs, will develop their own curriculum. The implementation of this legislation could provide a significant opportunity to impact the future financial literacy and employability of individuals with disabilities. Parents should monitor how their child will have these learning skills integrated into their Individual Education Plan.

RESOURCES

A. Curricula

1. Money Smart- www.fdic.gov/consumers/consumer/moneysmart
2. High School Financial Planning Program- www.hsfpp.nefe.org
3. Practical Money Skills for Life- www.practicalmoneyskills.com
4. Financial Fitness for Life- www.fffl.ncee.net

B. Additional Resources

1. U.S. Financial Literacy and Education Commission- www.mymoney.gov
2. FDIC Community Affairs Program- www.fdic.gov/consumers/community
3. America Saves- www.AmericaSaves.org
4. Iowa Community Colleges- www.iowaccess.org/educate/ccwp/cc/index
5. Iowa Chapter of AARP- (toll free) 1-866-554-5378
6. Iowa Youth Leadership Forum- www.state.ia.us/dhr/pd

VIII.

Home Ownership / Living in the Community

Historically, home ownership has been out of reach for the vast majority of individuals with disabilities. Even though it may not be financially feasible for many individuals, there are resources and incentives to make home ownership possible for some individuals with disabilities. It is important for individuals with disabilities and their families to be aware of these options.

A. Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) Program

Section 8 Vouchers (formerly used just for renting) can be used by low-income people, including individuals with disabilities, to buy their first home. The individual's local Public Housing Authority must allow the Section 8 Voucher to be used for the purchase of a home. To participate, the individual must have an annual income of at least the monthly federal SSI benefit multiplied by twelve (for an annual income). All participants must attend home ownership education and training. The voucher can be used to pay the mortgage payment, mortgage insurance, maintenance, homeowners insurance, utilities, etc. instead of paying rent to a private landlord or living in government housing. Participants are able to maintain their Voucher for 30 years. The participant needs to contribute one percent of the purchase price as a down payment.

RESOURCES

1. Identify your local Public Housing Authority- www.nhl.gov/offices/pih/pha/contacts/states/ia.cfm
2. Fact Sheet on Housing Vouchers- www.nhl.gov/offices/pih/programs/hcv/about/fact_sheet/cfm
3. HUD Field Office-Des Moines- 515-284-4512

B. Family Self-Sufficiency Program (FSS)

The FSS program is an employment and savings program for low-income families that receive Section 8 vouchers. Through this program, earned income through work can be set-aside and not counted as income until an eligible employment goal is met. The program consists of both case management services that help participants pursue employment goals and of escrow accounts into which the local Public Housing Authority deposits the increased rental charges that a family pays as its earnings rise. After five years, if the participant completes the program by meeting the employment goal, the participant may withdraw the funds from their account (with interest) for any purpose. Most individuals use the funds for home ownership, transportation, education or to begin a small business start-up. Participation with this program is voluntary for each local Public Housing Authority.

RESOURCES

1. Contact your local PHA and find out if they participate www.nhl.gov/offices/pih/pha/contacts/states/ia.cfm
2. Fact Sheet on Family Self-Sufficiency Program www.wid.org/programs/access-to-assets/fact-sheets/family-self-sufficiency-program

C. HUD Earned Income Disregard

Individuals with disabilities living in certain types of housing (Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program, Supportive Housing Program, Home Investment Partnerships Program and the Housing Opportunities to Persons with AIDS Program) can work without an immediate increase in rent. This “disregard” allows a tenant to go to work and his/her earnings will not be counted in calculating the rent for the first year. In the second year of employment, only half of the earnings will be counted in figuring the rent payment.

RESOURCE

Fact Sheet on Earned Income Disregard-
[www.mnworkincentives.com/sote/files/ HUD%20EID%20Handout](http://www.mnworkincentives.com/sote/files/HUD%20EID%20Handout)

D. Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)

The CDBG program under HUD provides annual grants on a formula basis to general units of local government and the States. Each unit of local government establishes its own plan on how to use the funding with citizen participation. CDBG funding can be used to build or renovate housing for poor individuals with disabilities. Individuals with disabilities, their families and advocates need to participate with the development of their local plan so that accessible housing can be developed locally.

RESOURCE

Fact Sheet on Community Development Block Grants- [www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/ communitydevelopment/programs](http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/communitydevelopment/programs)

E. Medicaid Waiver Programs

Medicaid Waiver programs do not develop housing or pay rent or mortgage payments. However, they fund staff support which makes it possible for many individuals with disabilities to live in community housing. Iowa has seven waivers: mental retardation waiver; ill and handicapped waiver; physical disabilities waiver; children’s mental health waiver; brain injury waiver; AIDS/HIV waiver and the elderly waiver. Each waiver has its own eligibility standards and its own list of available services. Some waivers have dollar limits per month or limited units per month or a total dollar limit per year. In addition, all of the waivers except the Children’s Mental Health waiver have Consumer Directed Attendant Care (CDAC) as an available service. An individual or agency may provide this service. The consumer, parent or guardian shall be responsible for selecting and overseeing the individual or agency providing the service.

More recently, a Consumer Choices Option has been added to all Medicaid Waiver programs except the Children’s Mental Health waiver. This option allows Iowans even more flexibility and the choice of taking the responsibility for planning and controlling their services. A fiscal intermediary is established and the consumer purchases services and draws down the money to pay their service provider(s).

RESOURCES

1. Contact your case manager or your local Central Point of Coordination.
2. Information Packets on Medicaid Waivers- www.ime.state.ia.us/HCBS/help_ownhome
3. Information on Consumer Choice Option www.ime.state.ia.us/HCBS/HCBSConsumerOptions

F. HCBS Rent Subsidy

Individuals who receive services under the HCBS Medicaid Waiver program can receive rent assistance from the Iowa Finance Authority. The program provides a monthly rent assistance payment to these individuals to help them live successfully in their own home and community until they become eligible for any other local, state, or federal rent assistance (such as Section 8 rent assistance).

RESOURCES

1. Information from Iowa Finance Authority- www.iowafinanceauthority.gov/en/for_renters/hcbs_rent_subsidy_program
2. Contact your case manager or supported living provider for assistance in completing the application form.

G. Accessible Housing

The availability of accessible housing is a major barrier to community participation for individuals with disabilities. Many of the Medicaid Waivers have a home and vehicle modifications service which provides some funding for home modifications. Local organizations and churches may provide some financial assistance also. The Midwest Accessibility Initiative is a nonprofit organization which exists to train and support contractors who are actively doing construction or remodeling work for seniors and persons with disabilities. The Initiative includes over 100 construction companies in Iowa as well as South Dakota, Nebraska, Missouri, Illinois and Wisconsin.

RESOURCES

1. Information Packet on Medicaid Waivers- www.ime.state.ia.us/HCBS/help_ownhome
2. Midwest Accessibility Initiative- (toll free) 1-888-679-1840

IX.

Trusts for Individuals with Disabilities

Special Needs Trusts are basically arrangements where funds can be invested for a recipient of SSI or Medicaid without losing eligibility. Iowa law differentiates trusts based on whether the trust is established with a beneficiary's own assets or established with third party assets (a parent, grandparent, guardian or a court). These distinctions can make a difference in the amount of money per month which can be accessed/utilized and not affect the beneficiary's eligibility for SSI or Medicaid. Upon the death of the beneficiary, generally any monies remaining in the trust must first go back to the state up to the amount of medical assistance funding provided to the beneficiary. Iowa has the following trust options: Medical Assistance Special Needs Trust; Pooled Special Needs Trust; Medical Assistance Income Trust (Miller Trust) and Supplemental Needs Trust for Persons with Disabilities.

RESOURCES

1. See Section I of the full report.
2. Midwest Special Needs Trust- www.midwestspecialneedstrust.org/trust/faq
3. Supplemental Needs Trust- Iowa Code 634A- www.legis.state.ia.us
4. Estate planning for individuals with disabilities-Frank Varvaris and Associates- www.disabilityplanning.org

X. **Tax Benefits for Businesses**

There are several tax benefits for businesses that could increase the physical accessibility to the business for individuals with disabilities and the elderly or support the employment of individuals with disabilities.

A. Disabled Access Credit

This is a federal tax credit for small businesses. Eligible access expenditures include removing physical barriers, providing qualified interpreters or other methods of making audio materials available to hearing-impaired individuals, making visual materials available to individuals with visual impairments or acquiring or modifying equipment or devices. The small business may take the credit each and every year they incur access expenditures.

RESOURCES

1. www.workworld.org/wwwwebhelp/disabled_access_tax_credit
2. www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f8826.pdf

B. Barrier Removal Tax Deduction

This federal tax deduction encourages businesses of any size to remove architectural and transportation barriers to the mobility of persons with disabilities and the elderly. Businesses may claim a deduction of up to \$15,000 a year for qualified expenses for items that normally must be capitalized.

RESOURCES

1. www.workworld.org/wwwwebhelp/barrier_removal_tax_deduction
2. www.irs.gov/formspubs/index.html Click on Publication #535

C. Work Opportunity Credit

Employers can take a federal tax credit up to 40 per cent of the first \$6,000 of first year wages of a new employee (including an employee with a disability). The credit is available to the employer once the employee has worked for at least 120 hours or 90 days.

RESOURCES

1. www.doleta.gov/business/incentives/opptax
2. www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f8850.pdf

XI. **Conclusion**

Individuals with disabilities can work, can save money, acquire assets and become more self-sufficient. We must replace our low expectations with the utilization, over time, of a variety of existing incentives and strategies. The integrated use of these opportunities can assist individuals with disabilities to live and work in the community. Parents, providers, schools, advocacy organizations, state agencies and individuals with disabilities themselves all have a part to play in advancing this movement.

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