

Postsecondary Education and Employment Outcomes for Youth with Intellectual Disabilities

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Individuals who participate in postsecondary education have better jobs. Youth with intellectual disabilities have the lowest rates of education, work, or preparation for work after high school of all disability groups. Nationally, there is a growing interest in postsecondary education as a way to improve employment and other key life areas for individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID). Vocational Rehabilitation agencies can play an important role by supporting the inclusion of individuals with ID in postsecondary education and including it in their Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

This Fast Fact describes the employment outcomes of youth with ID who participated in postsecondary education as part of their IPE compared to youth with ID who did not participate in postsecondary education. In 2007, a total of 36,154 youth with ID who entered vocational rehabilitation services between the ages of 16–26 left vocational rehabilitation services. Of these individuals, 1,223 (3.4%) participated in some type of postsecondary education and 537 (1.5%) successfully completed a non-degree program, associate degree, vocational/technical certificate, bachelor’s degree, or graduate degree program.

The 312 (58%) individuals who did not have a job when starting vocational rehabilitation services, and who completed a postsecondary program, left vocational rehabilitation services with competitive employment, earning on average \$338 per week. The table below shows that attending postsecondary education resulted in a 48% employment rate and \$316 weekly earnings. In contrast, youth (32%) who did not receive postsecondary education services who left vocational rehabilitation services with jobs had an average weekly income of only \$195.

Data from the national vocational rehabilitation database (RSA 911) show that youth with ID who participated in postsecondary education were 26% more likely to leave vocational rehabilitation services with a paid job and earn a 73% higher weekly income. Despite positive employment outcomes for youth with ID who receive postsecondary education services, the percentage of youth who receive these services as part of their IPE is low. The data summarized for this Fast Fact indicate that further study of the impact of postsecondary education on employment outcomes of individuals with intellectual disabilities is needed, especially related to the role of vocational rehabilitation, since postsecondary education, as in the case of the general population, is a promising practice. Lifelong learning promotes academic, professional, and personal development for all citizens to live lives of dignity and purpose.

Data Set: RSA 911

Table: VR Outcomes for Youths with Intellectual Disabilities

	Total	Paid employment		Earnings
	#	#	%	\$
Youths with ID who did not receive postsecondary education (PSE) services	34,931	11,261	32%	195
Youths with ID who received PSE services	1,223	589	48%	316
Youths with ID who, after PSE services, attained a higher level of education	537	312	58%	338

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