

**What is a sheltered workshop?**

A sheltered workshop is a segregated employment setting that exclusively employs people with disabilities or where people with disabilities work separately from others. Sheltered workshops usually are located in large institutional facilities. The tasks that individuals with disabilities perform in sheltered workshops are generally rote and mundane, and offer little, if any, skill development, training or advancement. These segregated work environments rarely result in meaningful transition to mainstream work environments among the general population.

**What is “integrated” or “supported” employment?**

Integrated employment is a real job in a community-based business setting where employees work alongside non-disabled co-workers and earn at least minimum wage. Under the supported employment model, individualized supports are provided to workers with disabilities who are earning competitive wages.

**Are there differences in compensation for persons who work in sheltered workshops instead of integrated, supported employment?**

Yes. Because of exceptions in wage and hour laws, workers confined to sheltered workshops can be and typically are paid sub-minimum wage. By contrast, workers in supported employment tend to earn minimum wage or greater.

**How does supported employment assist individuals with disabilities?**

Federally funds channeled through state agencies are used to train individuals with disabilities to work in an integrated setting. Supported employment services include vocational training that prepare individuals with disabilities to have a real job. Training, support and job coaching can be provided both before and during employment.

**Do State employees provide this training?**

No. Service providers, sometimes called "brokerages," receive funding to provide supported employment training. Although some brokerages in Oregon have recognized the benefits of providing supported employment and training for disabled citizens, many have not.

**How large is the class of individuals with disabilities that the lawsuit seeks to help?**

The class consists of thousands of individuals at any given time as they become old enough to work. Presently, over 2,300 individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities are segregated into sheltered workshops in Oregon. Many more are referred to or considered for admission to sheltered workshops every year when they graduate from special education programs – including those youth who have the ability and interest to work in integrated employment as well as those who have integrated work experience, but upon graduation have no employment option other than sheltered workshops.

**How much does the State of Oregon spend on sheltered workshops?**

Oregon spends approximately \$30 million per year on sheltered workshops. This amounts to approximately \$2,515,760 per month.

**What are the cost implications for ending reliance on sheltered workshops and moving toward integrated, supported employment?**

In the long run, it would cost less. In its 2010 “Call to Action” report, the state’s Office of Developmental Disability Services (a division within the Oregon Department of Human Resources) concluded that sheltered workshops cost as much as three times more than supported employment. Academic studies support this finding, and show that any increased up-front costs in the transition from sheltered workshops to supported employment are offset in the long run and savings are achieved.

**Given Oregon’s current economy, is supported employment realistic?**

Yes. Across the country, supported employment programs are viable. Most supported employment jobs are in the service sector – not in the manufacturing sector that has suffered more job losses due to the economy. Also many supported employment jobs are part-time or entry-level positions that can be sustained despite current economic conditions.

**What has been the Oregon history in connection with sheltered workshops?**

Oregon was once in the forefront of a national movement to reduce the number of sheltered workshops and increase opportunities for integrated and supported employment. But the state changed course in the mid-1990s, and since then, the raw number and percentage of persons served in sheltered workshops has more than doubled, while the number and percentage served in supported employment has almost halved.

**What type of relief does the lawsuit aim to achieve?**

The lawsuit seeks injunctive relief to require that the State provide supported employment programs in an integrated employment setting for all qualified class members consistent with their individual needs.

The lawsuit also seeks an injunction so that the State is required to develop and implement a plan approved by the court that describes each of the activities that must be undertaken to modify the State’s employment service system, including infra-structure modifications, definitions of the types of services to be provided, training for those who will provide the services, education for families of persons with developmental disabilities, and coordination among the numerous state agencies that play a role in providing assistance to persons with disabilities.

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