

Actions Needed to Ensure People with Disabilities Can Access DOL Job Programs

GAO-26-107473

January 2026

A report to congressional requesters

For more information, contact: Elizabeth H. Curda at Curdae@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

Seven percent of participants in the Department of Labor (DOL) workforce programs GAO reviewed reported having disabilities, according to DOL data from July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024. Participants with disabilities had worse employment outcomes. Of those reporting a disability, 43 percent did not report their disability type (e.g., a physical or cognitive disability). GAO found that the completeness of these data varied widely by state. DOL has taken steps to improve the completeness of these state-collected data, which could help it improve outcomes for participants with different types of disabilities. However, officials said they do not plan to target assistance to states with less complete data.

State and local workforce agencies GAO visited have made various efforts to ensure their programs are accessible to participants with disabilities. For example, officials GAO interviewed said they have provided assistive technology such as computers that are accessible to people with visual impairments (see figure). However, officials also reported challenges ensuring that training provided outside of job centers is accessible and providing certain accommodations such as sign language interpreters.

Computer Workstation with Accessibility Features at a Job Center



Source: GAO. | GAO-26-107473

DOL monitors state and local workforce agencies to help ensure its programs are accessible but does not routinely analyze monitoring results. DOL's monitoring reports include an examination of state and local accessibility efforts, but the agency has not developed a procedure to analyze them at an aggregate level, which increases the risk the agency will fail to identify and address widespread issues. Also, DOL has provided guidance and technical assistance on a range of accessibility topics. However, officials GAO interviewed in several local areas were not aware of or do not use these resources. Without evaluating awareness or use of its guidance and assistance, DOL may miss opportunities to improve dissemination of materials or take other actions to promote them.

Why GAO Did This Study

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act authorizes programs that help job seekers access services at locations called job centers. It prohibits discrimination, requiring that services be accessible to people with disabilities. GAO was asked to examine efforts to ensure programs are accessible.

This report addresses (1) the share of participants in selected DOL workforce programs that report disabilities and use services, and their employment outcomes, (2) the efforts made and challenges faced by state and local workforce agencies to ensure the programs' services are accessible to people with disabilities, and (3) DOL's efforts to ensure the programs are accessible.

GAO analyzed participant-level DOL data from July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024, the most recent year available; reviewed relevant federal laws, policies, and agency documents; interviewed DOL and state officials, disability organizations, and participants with disabilities; and visited a non-generalizable sample of 12 job centers in Arkansas, Oregon, Virginia, and the District of Columbia, selected for variation in geographic location, urban or rural population, and percentage of participants with disabilities.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making three recommendations: that DOL (1) take additional steps to collect more complete data on participants' disability type, (2) develop a procedure to routinely analyze state monitoring reports, and (3) evaluate awareness and use of guidance and technical assistance. DOL disagreed with the first recommendation and agreed with the other two. GAO maintains that additional steps to collect more complete data are needed, as discussed in the report.