

EMPLOYMENT TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES THROUGHOUT RWJBH/CSH

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Purpose: Environmental scan of training and employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities offered throughout the RWJBH/CSH System.

Background: RWJBH/CSH is a research rich innovative environment that serves thousands of individuals with developmental and physical disabilities. In our care system, we have three programs that offer training and employment, including two Project Search programs at Monmouth Medical Center and Jersey City Medical Center, and a work readiness program at Children's Specialized Hospital (CSH) Mountainside in conjunction with the Union County Educational Services Commission. Through these programs we provide training for approximately (~31) individuals per year.

Why is this important?: NJ has an estimated 1.7 million (1) individuals with disabilities. The number of young adults with a disability entering the workforce has grown by more than nondisabled persons (Fig 1). By current estimates this will continue to increase over the next 10 years as the incidence of newly diagnosed developmental disabilities continues to rise year over year.

The working-age disabled population increased by more than the working-age nondisabled population

Average annual civilian noninstitutional population ages 16 to 64 and indexed to 2019, by disability status, 2019–2023

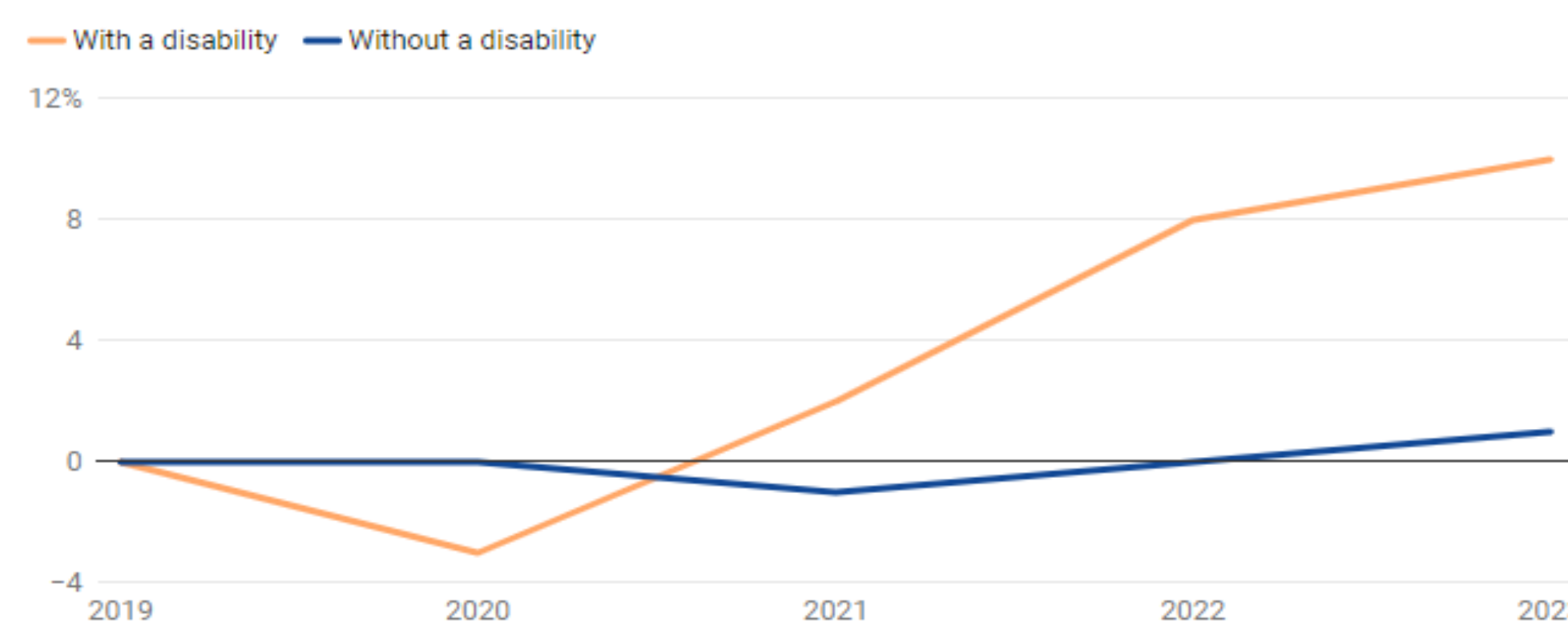


Fig.1 Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey: (unadj) Population - With a disability, 16 to 64 years," available at <https://beta.bls.gov/dataViewer/view/timeseries/LNU00076950> (last accessed February 2024); U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey: (unadj) Population - With no disability, 16 to 64 years," available at <https://beta.bls.gov/dataViewer/view/timeseries/LNU00076935> (last accessed February 2024).

Benefits: Businesses that employ individuals with disabilities have improved retention and performance in high-turnover and entry level positions. Interns and employees with disabilities act as role models for employees, and our patients and their families creating a culture that embodies RWJBH's commitment of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

Barriers: Identifying a space for interns to meet daily.

Available Resources/funding: Funding is through the local school districts, DDD, DVRS, and private pay.

Solutions within RWJBH/CSH

1) **Project search-** A 10-month internship program for people with disabilities whose intention is to find competitive employment. At the end of the internship, the goal is to have 70% or more placed in competitive employment defined as year-round employment at the prevailing wage or greater at least 16 hours per week.

a) **Monmouth Medical Center** began Project Search in 2019, graduating 7 interns per year, with more than 75% finding employment. They won a national award in 2023, distinction for high rate of employability (90% for 2023 class).

b) **Jersey City Medical Center-** began Project Search in 2018, graduating 6-8 interns per year with excellent employment placement (>75%).

2) **CSH Mountainside Hospital-** Work readiness program has 4-8 Interns attend 2 mornings per week each year. Additionally, there is a 5-week summer program with ~11 students attending 4 days a week. Roles include: food cart, site greeter, primary care support and operations.

Discussion: The majority of individuals with disabilities, especially intellectual disability are unemployed (~70%). However, companies that employ individuals with disabilities have on average ~30% higher revenue, double the net income, and 30% higher profit margins. This has been attributed to higher retention and better performance. In fact, the U.S. GDP could get a boost of up to \$25 billion if more individuals with disabilities joined the work force (2). RWJBH/CSH is committed to inclusivity and neurodiversity with proven successful internship to work programs for the neurodivergent community we serve. Monmouth Medical Center and Jersey City Medical Center have exceptional outcomes through Project Search placing upwards of 90% of their interns in competitive employment positions. To date our tremendously successful programs have served a small cohort of individuals. Expanding these programs not only makes good business sense but also places RWJBH/CSH as a DEI leader.

References

- 1) NJ.Gov/humanservices/disabilityemployment.html
- 2) Getting to Equal: The Disability Inclusion Advantage. An Untapped talent Pool: The Opportunity in Employing People with Disabilities . 2018. <https://www.accenture.com/content/dam/accenture/final/a-com-migration/pdf/pdf-89/accenture-disability-inclusion-research-report.pdf>.