nTIDE Season 9 - Episode 4 - 4/5/2024

**Recorded Introduction:** Hello, and welcome everybody to the National Trends in Disability, Employment or nTide Lunch and Learn Series. Just a few housekeeping items. Before we begin, this webinar is being recorded. We will post an archive of each webinar each month on our website at www.researchondisability.org slash type. This site will also provide copies of the presentations, the speakers bios, bull transcripts, and other valuable resources. As an attendee of this webinar, you are a viewer to ask questions of the speakers. Click on the Q and A box on your webinar screen and type your questions into the box. Speakers will review these questions and provide answers. During the last section of the webinar, some questions may be answered directly in the Q And A box.

If you have any questions following this recording, please contact us at disability statistics at and or toll free at 866-538-9521 for more information. Thanks for joining us and enjoy today's webinar.

**Megan Henly:** Hi everyone, my name is Megan Henly. I use she/her pronouns. I am a white woman sitting at my desk here in New Hampshire, where we have power at the University of New Hampshire campus. I have shoulder-length dark hair and I'm wearing a grey sweater. I wanted to provide a little bit of background info before we dive into the information to orient any new users here, here are some Zoom tips. You may edit your settings and close captioning. I have a setting on display here that I can leave up for a minute. This shows you can click on the arrow next to the phrase Audio Settings to select a different speaker or device.

The second tip, if you would like to see close captions, you can click on the CC icon for close captioning to see subtitles or select view full transcript for a running text of all of the information we will be sharing. There is also a link in the chat to be able to find the URL to see CART captioning.

OK. Today's nTIDE Lunch & Learn is a webinar we do on the first Friday of each month to coincide with the federal government's update on employment. This is a joint effort of the University of New Hampshire, the Kessler Foundation and AUCD, the Association of University Centers on Disabilities.

Here's a brief agenda of today's program. For part one, John O'Neill of the Kessler Foundation will describe our work, and then I will report some of the numbers for March 2024. In part two, we will have Liz Weintraub from AUCD provide us with some policy news, and then I will introduce our guest speakers from Disability Rights Louisiana, Carolyn LeBrane Tilton and Alexander Andreson. We will have time at the end for questions and answers. To start, I would like to turn it over to John O'Neill.

**John O'Neill:** Thank you Megan. The nTIDE report is monthly and it is a press release with an infographic. We are looking at the most current employment statistics which are always from the most… last month, when those statistics are collected by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics on the first Friday of each month. It is the jobs report essentially. It is released by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, and usually, it is almost always released on the first Friday of each month. Just as a point of information which many of you may already know, we do a midmonth Deeper Dive as well.

The source of the data that we use is from the current population survey, otherwise referred to as the CPS. It's a product of the US Bureau of Labor Statistics and it is the source of… the official unemployment rate which of the media makes so much of. We do not report on the unemployment rate, that is not one of our primary statistics mainly because you never know when it goes up or down why it is going up or down, people could be leaving the labor market and then the unemployment rate will be down. Or they could be entering the labor market, and the employment rate would go up because they would be looking for work.

The data is on civilians aged 16-64 not living in institutions. It's been available, our data on disability has been available since 2008 when the six disability questions were added to the Census Bureau products, and that obviously includes the current population survey as well.

In the beginning we reported the year-to-year statistics because the data is not seasonally adjusted. But when COVID occurred we started reporting month-to-month. As well as year-to-year. We focus primarily on the month-to-month. And that has given us some detailed information which many of you are familiar with. But it is… We also report on the year-to-year, but it is kind of a secondary look to that. Back to you Megan.

**Megan Henly:** Thank you, John. Right, we will dive right into the numbers then. I will say that the press release is coming out very soon! We had a bit of a power outage here up in the Northeast, you might've heard. So, if you do not have this in your inbox yet it is on the way. I will start by sharing the latest employment to population ratio with you.

This is starting of a trendline dating back to 2008 and going through all of February 2024. So, this is the data we had available to us last month. The topline in blue shows the percentage of the working age population without disabilities who are employed and then below that in green we see the percentage of people with disabilities who are employed.

This graph, as always, has some of the historical contexts noted ingratiating. So, there is the great recession in the earlier time of this period from about mid-2009 and 10. We see a skinny grey line in the middleware COVID-19 affected employment rate in mid-2020. It shows how the context affected employment in both of these cases. These last two numbers highlighted at the far right for each line, so for people without disabilities the employment population ratio increased slightly by .4 percentage points to 74.6%.

And for people with disabilities, that ratio had decreased by just about one full percentage point. So, when we move forward to show the latest numbers from March, what I will say is that the employment rate for both groups continued in the same direction as they were headed. So, there's a bit of an increase again for those without disabilities, and increase up to 75.1% employed of the total working age population without disabilities. And then for those with disabilities, it is down just a small amount, again by .2 percentage points to 36.5%.

At this point, this is for continuous months of the decrease of the employment to population ratio for working age people with disabilities. But we’ll note the historical trend here. So, we’re still in this post-COVID historical high for the employment rate. While it’s not great news that we see this decrease for a few months in a row, we’re not yet at the point that it’s particularly bad considering the whole historical context.

For further context I will show one more graph for the labor force participation rates. Again, this starts with the story from last month's nTIDE where we saw the same pattern in unemployment, people without disabilities saw a bit of an increase in labor force participation, this was last month. And those with disabilities saw a slight decrease. When we add the March numbers, what we see is for people without a disability again there is an increase in labor force participation, but we also see a slight increase here for people with a disability in labor force participation. It went from 40.1% in February to 40.3% in March. So even though we have seen this rate go down a bit for people with disabilities in these past few months, labor force participation is a bit more study! So this suggests there are people with disabilities looking for work and depending on that outcome, it will be really interesting to see what will happen in the coming months as we see the April and May numbers to know if this very modest increase in labor force participation for people with disabilities translates into an increase in employment for them in the months to come. So that is going to be something for us to watch for. We will have all those details out in the press release.

That is our update for the numbers. What I would like to do now is turn it over to Liz Weintraub from the Association of University Centers on Disabilities. Blaze is the host of Tuesdays with Liz: Disability Policy for All. I would love to introduce you now Liz, please show your slides.

**Liz Weintraub:** Thank you, Megan! Before you begin, I should say that I'm filling in for Denice Rouselle, which I'm sure you all know. She is the primary person working with you. So, if there are some questions that I cannot answer, I'm sure she will be willing to answer them for you next month. So here is the federal policy update.

We are planning -- finally finished with fiscal year 2024, yay! Now we are working on FY 2025. There is a link here about the President's FY 2025 budget. It was released. The Senate passed on March 20th the Recognizing the Role of DSPs, direct support professionals. Which for me, as someone with disability who uses the services, is very dear to my heart. Senator Hassan, a Democrat from New Hampshire, and Senator Collins, a Republican from Maine, sponsored this. The bill will make the government collect more data on direct support professionals who are people that help people with disabilities every day.

Lastly, yesterday there was a White House call with the Office of Public Engagement Aging and Disability Communities Call, and they are hosted regularly every month… I think every month…by the White House to discuss federal updates affecting older adults and people with disabilities. And if you are interested there is a link to register.

This is a reminder, because Denise reported on this last month, but we felt it was important to talk about because the comments are due at the end of the month. There is a new transportation proposed rule to improve air travel for people with disabilities. People who use wheelchairs. It makes it easier for Department of Transportation to hold airlines responsible when they damage a wheelchair. I can't tell you how exciting -- excited I am about this because there are so many of my friends who stepped off the airplane and find their wheelchair is broken.

As Megan said I am host of Tuesdays with Liz, and there was an interview I did with the disability policy advisor for the Department of Transportation about this role, so if you're interested in that, the link is right there.

Plain language is something that is very important, and it is one of my favorite things to talk about. The workforce GPS plain language foundation was one webcast press release, it was recorded last November, and it was done by the Department of Labor. We have a partnership with AIR-P and we -- they are hosting a webinar called Introduction to Plain Language Writing for academic and researchers on April 16th from 4-5 Eastern time and it will be presented by ASAN, which is the self-advocacy organization which is for people, primarily people with autism, but other disabilities. The webinar will be in the purview of writing for people who write in academic language and learn the principles of plain language writing, and have a chance to put them in practice with interactive exercises. There are exercises and there will be a Q&A period. So, if you are interested, sign up. I plan to.

There is a special issue of the Journal of Vocational Rehab, examining the impact of preemployment transition services. And preemployment transition service. The term is pre-ETS are short-term services designed to help transitioning age with disability identifying career interests. The publisher of the Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation is providing open access to this issue for 90 days – so you can read it for free.

There is an advancing disability inclusion in very small businesses, a national open dialogue, the advancing disability inclusion for small business is open, and join this important conversation and help support ODEP - office of disability employment policy - and USDOL is the Department of Labor. Support disability inclusion in business that employ fewer than 50 people or are owned by a disabled person. Your ideas could help inform policy and the development of new resources and tools to address the needs of very small businesses. Through May, you can register your ideas and give feedback and ideas submitted by others. If you are interested, go to this website to learn more information.

There is another webinar on state policy to include improve mental health and employment for use with marginalized racial identities. The CAPE is sponsored by the Council of State governments. There is a link to the recent brief on this topic using state policy to improve mental health access for youth with marginalized racial identity. It features policy makers, speakers from the White House Domestic Policy Counsel and subject matter experts. Ways policymakers can expand culturally responsive mental health care, increase access to mental health supports and embedded mental health programs and supports into workforce systems. You can join this webinar if you are interested; it is next week at 1:30 PM Eastern time. I will turn it over to Megan.

**Megan Henly:** Liz, thank you so much for providing all of that great background and for being willing to jump in to fill in today. We really appreciate it, and if anyone has questions, we can get to some of those at the end. For those asking about links to some of these, the slides will be posted to our site after this call today. And as we can, we will try to plug individual ones as they come up. I wanted to turn it over to part three of today's webinar and introduce our guest speakers.

We are lucky to have two guest speakers from Disability Rights Louisiana. They both worked on the FAIR program. We will hear more about that later. That program empowers formerly incarcerated people to meet financial goals and move past their struggles. We have Carolyn LeBrane Tilton, program manager of FAIR. She is a tireless advocate for social justice. In her four-decade career, she served justice involving people in many different roles, building on her personal experience of being a mother with an incarcerated child. Compassion has become her life's work.

We also have Alexander Andreasen, who is a dedicated fair case manager with a wide range of skills. In his work, he addresses various barriers to reentry for his clients. This includes housing, transportation, job training, vocational rehabilitation, benefits counseling and financial coaching. I will turn it over to our guest speakers.

**Carolyn LeBrane Tilton:** Thank you, Megan. Hello everyone. I’m Carolyn, I’m a light-skinned African American woman with light brown hair, styled in a medium length bob. I’m wearing a black blazer and a zebra print blouse. I am here with my colleague, Alexander.

**Alexander Andreson:** And my name is Alexander Andreson. I am a white man with a textured mullet on a wooden background.

**Carolyn LeBrane Tilton:** Together, we will discuss how the FAIR program empowers formerly incarcerated individuals with disabilities by focusing on employment and their financial well-being. Next slide please.

Founded in 1977, Disability Rights Louisiana, also known as DRLA, launched the FAIR program in 2018 with the signature employment grant from the Kessler Foundation. Now in our fifth year, we are the sole program of its kind in the state and in the nation, bridging a critical service gap for those at the crossroads of visibility and post-incarceration. Now, I will hand it over to Alex to share insights about our clients.

**Alexander Andreson:** I believe this is not the correct slide. Can we go back one? Oh, looks like our demographics didn't make it in but I will talk about them anyway. So, the essence of our program is illuminated by the people who are part of the program. Our mission is rooted in providing nuanced support to navigate the hurdles of reintegration with the complexity of disability beyond their circumstances. Every individual we assist brings a unique story, underscored by a common thread: the pursuit of dignity and autonomy. As a result, all of our participants are navigating life post-incarceration with disabilities with a significant number identifying as male and Black or African American. Many of the people we have in our program come to us in their first year after release ready to turn over a new leaf.

**Carolyn LeBrane Tilton:** The magnitude and severity of America's criminal justice system poses a challenge unparalleled in other developed nations. 38% of state and federal prisoners report having a disability. Inadequate accommodations and compounding reentry challenges hinder access to rehabilitative programs. Individuals with a disability are four times more likely to be incarcerated and the problems of mental illness is a strain on both the individual and the carceral system.

Next, we will explore Louisiana's challenges which help shape our efforts. Here in Louisiana, the intersection of disability and incarceration highlights significant challenges, and also opportunities for change. With one third of Louisianans living with disabilities and facing high state incarceration rates, our communities are deeply affected. DLRA’S commitment to addressing such injustices is showcased in our legal triumphs, such as a groundbreaking lawsuit championing the rights of mentally ill individuals in prisons. These are the circumstances that laid the groundwork for our programming aimed at affecting meaningful change. It is against this backdrop that DRLA seized the opportunity to launch the FAIR program.

**Alexander Andreson:** We will go back to the previous slide if we could so I can talk about employment barriers. The employment landscape for our community is marked by significant barriers as illustrated by the data showing high unemployment among people with disabilities compared to nondisabled peers. This disparity widens when you consider race, where the likelihood of incarceration and consequently the challenge of finding employment post-release is notably higher for people of color.

These statistics are not just numbers. They reflect the lived experience of these individuals striving for a fair chance at employment and dignity. Through the FAIR program, we’re committed to dismantling these barriers, advocating for support and drive towards a future where employment serves as a cornerstone of independence. As we delve deeper, the focus shifts to income disparities that further complicate the reintegration journey for our clients. The income disparities faced by individuals with disabilities also extend beyond numbers, illustrating deep-rooted societal inequities. This divide is particularly pronounced among racial lines, and it limits access to resources and opportunities for a significant part of our community. At the FAIR program, we are driven by the reality behind the statistics. Our holistic approach includes financial coaching, employment support, and advocacy to address and transcend these systemic barriers blocking the way for true independence and equality.

Employment represents more than just a paycheck; it is a pathway to independence and self-esteem. Recognizing this, the FAIR program develops a comprehensive strategy to dismantle the myriad of obstacles our clients face. We assist with securing income support and housing, which is foundational to any pursuit of employment. We help with navigating healthcare, from Medicaid application to emergency prescription, ensuring that our client’s well-being is being taken care of. From vocational training to resume building, we assist our clients for success in the job market. And by addressing debt and financial literacy, we lay the groundwork for their financial stability. Our legal team supports us to address our concerns and fight for clients rights when necessary. We also provide access to education and tech training, essential for today's employment landscape. Building a supportive community is key to overcoming isolation and fostering resilience.

Through targeted interventions and relentless advocacy, the FAIR program stands committed to transforming these challenges into opportunities for growth and success, ensuring every client has the support they need for sustainable employment and reintegration.

**Carolyn LeBrane Tilton:** At FAIR, empowerment begins with empathy. We intentionally have a staff with lived experience who can understand our client's challenges and promote inclusiveness. Case managers serve as carers and connectors, linking clients to vital resources. The essence of our work is our financial coaching model. We help clients pinpoint their personal financial goals and aspirations through evaluations and assessments. We then collaborate and work towards achieving economic stability by coaching them in managing their finances, accessing benefits, and reducing debt.

Our 4-year FAIR Outcomes are tremendous. Just under 40% of people with disabilities in Louisiana are employed. By comparison, however, our clients, who have both a disability and a history of incarceration, which makes employment harder, do markedly better in the workforce with 51% securing jobs. These statistics serve as a powerful testament to the effectiveness of our program and motivate us to persist in our mission for inclusivity and support. Our program's financial coaching model has significantly enhanced our client's quality of life. And I think that is the wrong slide, but I will keep going. 55% of our clients increased their monthly income by over $103,000. Additionally, 32% reduced their debt by over $124,000, thus easing stress and opening new doors to financial self-sufficiency. We will now share a few examples of our client's success.

**Alexander Anderson:** Here is some information about Mr. Phillips. Mr. Phillips’ journey with the FAIR program helps us exemplify our holistic approach. When I met Mr. Phillips, he was battling severe mental illness and facing employment and housing challenges. The situation was complex. Our tailored plan included vocational training in partnership with a clinic for mental health care, directly addressing his most pressing barriers. This targeted support led to significant breakthroughs for Phillips. Stabilization of his mental health was the first critical step, which enabled his move into permanent, supportive housing, which now marks a new chapter of stability and hope for him. He is now taking further steps towards autonomy, including pursuing a driver's license to enhance his job prospects. Mr. Phillips’ story underlines the essence of our mission: to help individuals to overcome their obstacles and achieve their aspirations. His journey of transformation underscores the impact of comprehensive support, illustrating the possibility of a brighter future with the right assistance. I will pass it along to Miss Carolyn for the next slide.

**Carolyn LeBrane Tilton:** Another client, Mr. Davis, his journey underscores the transformative support of the FAIR Program. Emerging from 43 years behind bars, he encountered hurdles like blocked Social Security benefits and the daunting task of needing to find employment. Our team intervened to resolve his benefits issue and guided him in financial planning and management. His perseverance coupled with our financial coaching led to remarkable achievements! He purchased a car and secured a job as a school janitor which provided him with not only income but a sense of community contribution. Now Mr. Davis relishes his life, living in his dream senior apartment, a testament to the dignity and comfort he has earned.

Now we have a picture, we do not see it, but it’s a picture of Mr. Davis. He is standing proudly beside a red Chevrolet HHR at the FAIR office, a symbol of the independence and opportunities that came from his hard work, his perseverance, and of course, the support from the FAIR team. We were among the first people that he visited when he purchased the car, and in his own words he said, "I advise anybody and everybody who needs some type of assistance to get into the FAIR Program’. Mr. Davis’s endorsement reminds us that our assistance, bolstered by our community partnerships, goes beyond immediate needs, cultivates hope, and lays the groundwork for self-reliance. And this is on the next slide coming up. Alex?

**Alexander Andreson:** Awesome. Then I will jump into how important and crucial our community partnerships are. They’re really the backbone of our program, to help us bridge gaps and foster employment against all of these domains where we are not experts…but we have experts in our community.

With partners like Louisiana Rehabilitative Services and Job1, we connect clients to careers that offer both income and dignity. With organizations like Justice and Accountability Centre, they play a pivotal role in ensuring smooth legal transitions for our clients. Partnering with the credit union has helped to boost our client's financial literacy, which is a crucial step towards independence. We partnered with the National Disability Institute and Sampson to help equip our clients with essential knowledge about their rights and their available resources. Our healthcare partners ensure that no client health needs are overlooked, and advocates like Avengers Touchpoint help bring the challenges of disability and reentry to the forefront of policy discussions. Each partnership amplified our ability to support client’s self-sufficiency, highlighting the collaborative spirit that fuels our mission. Next slide.

Here are the demographics that I was referring to earlier, they are here now. Next slide. One more, I think… There is Mr. Davis! There we go, that is the one. Our heartfelt thanks go out first to the Kessler Foundation whose initial investment launched the FAIR program. All these other supportive organizations have believed in and funded our mission allowing us to grow and make an impact on formerly incarcerated Individuals with Disabilities.

As we bring our presentation to a close, we would like to point you towards our reference page. The data and stories shared today are just the tip of the iceberg. Oh… I'm sorry… This is…

**Carolyn LeBrane Tilton:** That's OK. Let's talk a little about lessons we have learned over our 4-year period. Our program has built crucial insights and has emphasized the significance of being flexible and providing holistic services. Integrating our financial coaching has notably enhanced our services and has resulted in improved job placement rates, increased full-time employment and better client job retention. This underscores how important it is to have the financial coaching as part of our program. We have been validated by our research from Rutgers University and the University of New Orleans and these insights highlight the effectiveness of our approach and inspire our ongoing commitment to continue to bolster community ties and to continue to provide resource access.

Our next slide we will talk a little about our future directions. Driven by the lessons learned and the success stories of those we have served, some of those who have heard, the FAIR program seeks to broaden our influence and increase the scope and depth of our impact. We plan to extend our outreach to the Hispanic community and provide transportation solutions to better support our clients doing job interviews and housing searches. Also, in collaboration with the local American job center, we have been asked to train employers on the benefits of inclusivity in hiring practices. And… Alex? Next slide.

**Alexander Andreson:** I jumped the gun a little bit but here are some of our references from the sides you have seen so far. If you look at the next slide you will see even more. We pay a lot of attention to data in our program, and we urge you to delve deeper into these statistics and studies that underpin our work at the FAIR program.

If you feel inspired or have questions about our work, we encourage you to reach out! The contact information provided on this slide is your direct line to our team members. Whether you’re seeking support, looking to collaborate or just want to learn more about what we do, we welcome your emails and calls. Together we make up a network of support for those reentering society and we are always looking to strengthen that network with new partners and new perspectives. You can also join us in shaping a more inclusive future with Disability Rights of Louisiana. You can dive into our wealth of resources on our website, and stay updated through our social media for the latest news and inspiring stories. Your engagement enriches our community and helps us to drive the meaningful change. As we conclude, we are eager to hear from you in our Q&A session. Thank you so much for having us!

**Megan Henly:** Great, and thank you both for your flexibility! I apologize to you both for the mix-ups we had with the slides, but you both did great on the fly there. We got some wonderful feedback from folks in attendance who have attended just to say thank you and great job with the presentation.

This is an issue that is often not paid a lot of attention to, and I know it is not covered a lot in other employment reports. Probably in part probably due to the lack of data on the national level. So, thank you very much for that! I encourage anyone in attendance who has questions to go ahead and pop them in the chat, whether for our guest speakers today from Disability Rights Louisiana or for AUCDs. I will start out with one question that has come in so far. Someone would like to know from your perspective, it is a two-parter, what is the greatest challenge in your work trying to help these clients? And if you could quickly remind us, has Louisiana acted to eliminate the payment of subminimum wages in your state?

**Alexander Andreson:** The greatest challenge, I think, in the work we do to support our clients is really housing. We’re struggling with the housing crisis in New Orleans that I know is not just for the New Orleans area, it is nationwide. That is the most difficult part. It is really difficult to keep a job if you do not have a place to lay your head or a place to shower, a place where you are not worried about your belongings being stolen. So housing is that foundational issue that gets in the way for a lot of clients looking for employment.

**Carolyn LeBrane Tilton:** Another challenge we face, and we have been trained on to really help our clients to dispel the myth that if you are disabled and you are employed or seeking employment, you can work and still apply for SSI, SSDI, and work as well. Many of our clients are hesitant about doing that, about seeking employment and then working, however, when we talk to them and we talk about what their goals and aspirations are, we begin to let them know how important it is to have additional income, to be able to achieve those goals. And one thing we ask them during our session – our first session, actually - is where do you see yourself in a year? Where do you see yourself in five years?

Of course, they want housing, they want their own apartment, they want a car. We help them with our financial coaching methods to understand that SSI, SSDI will not allow them to meet those goals. Once we begin to have those conversations and they trust us in helping them to understand how important work is, then we begin to work with them in terms of finding not just any employment but the right kind of employment that will allow them to continue to receive the benefits that they need.

**Megan Henly:** Thank you so much for that. A couple of other questions popping up in the chat here. One from a viewer asking do you have any suggestions for workplace accommodations for workers whose disabilities caused unpredictable days of extreme emotional and physical fatigue leading to excessive absences. A great question.

**Carolyn LeBrane Tilton:** That is a great question. I’ll give an example: we have a client right now who is currently working. Loves his job working in one of the restaurants. However, he is not able to stand long, and he is, his job is washing the dishes. So, we have been able to talk with the employer and help the employer to understand that an accommodation is necessary. Now, he is able to either sit for a while, while he is doing the work, or step away from the work. We find that our employers work with us to make those accommodations that are necessary.

**Alexander Andreson:** If I could just add on to that, I don't know if the asker has ever heard of AskJan.org, but that is a great resource for anyone that is looking for accommodations. You can go to their A-Z list. and you can then sort it by disability, by limitation, by work-related function, so that gives you a great list of ideas for things that might help you to achieve work if you feel like your disability is getting in the way of that.

**Megan Henly:** Great resource. Thanks, Alexander. One other question coming in here. We have another question asking if you have any concerns about taking a group of people who have been incarcerated and having them... introducing them into a system, if there are concerns they will be taken advantage of, and if there are any approaches you can consider in trying to address that. Or is that not a concern?

**Carolyn LeBrane Tilton:** Alexander, you can pitch in too. One of the things we are working very closely with Job One, an American job center, and that is the reason why we have been asked to do some training with their employers, to help their employers to understand the need for accommodations, and to give them information on how they can make those accommodations that are necessary. We are looking forward to being able to provide that training, because it has not been provided, quite frankly. So, they have asked us to do that for them. I’m thinking that once we do that and continue to work with the employers, there will be a lot of understanding of what needs to happen to allow persons to be able to work effectively.

**Alexander Andreson:** To add onto that, that is part of what we are trying to incorporate into our program, that we are now calling the soft handoff, which is where we know the organizations and the people that we are referring our clients to. We are not pushing them to rejoin society and to reach out to people that we are not familiar with. We know who we are referring to and what their goals are. So, we will speak with, for example, I will speak with [unknown] about their loan program if my client needs a loan for furniture. I will make sure that the person on the other end knows what my client's goals are and knows how to reach out to me if there are other questions to make sure that services are fulfilled in the way I am intending when I send the referral over.

**John O'Neill:** I have a quick question. I know that one of your services is educating the folks that you work with in terms of disability identity, am I correct? Is that a bit of a challenge? I would imagine it might be a new concept to some of these folks, or it may not. I do not know.

**Carolyn LeBrane Tilton:** Tell me more about what you mean when you say disability identity?

**John O'Neill:** Someone who identifies as having a disability and is comfortable receiving services from disability service organizations. I may be just all wrong, that’s a possibility.

**Carolyn LeBrane Tilton:** When you say comfortable receiving services from disability organizations, we are very upfront, for example, we are involved in many networks that we have been asked to be involved with, we’re very present in the community. You can see our shirts. We actually have people coming to us saying “I need your services”, “I didn’t know that you existed, I’m so glad I did”, “I need to come and talk to you, please let me know how you can help me”. So, we have not had that challenge of people who identify as someone with a disability not willing to come. They are seeking us out.

**John O'Neill:** I may have misheard this, but I understand from Elaine that you have just received some significant additional funding. Am I correct?

**Carolyn LeBrane Tilton:** Yes, we have. We are still on the moon with that. We were given a significant grant from McKenzie Scott, and we actually requested $1 million, and because of the work that we have been doing, we received $2 million. We are just ecstatic about how that is going to be able to help us to increase our impact.

**Alexander Andreson:** And that is not just the FAIR program, that is the whole agency. We work with some people who do incredible work here.

**John O'Neill:** Congratulations on that.

**Megan Henly:** Thanks for bringing that up, John. That is amazing. One thing that occurred to me, I was hearing you speak and thinking in the context of this monthly webinar where we’re present on employment trends is that we are limited in how we can analyze these national data. It depends what measures are on the current population survey. I know incarceration status is not something captured there, and it demonstrates how this can be a challenge to understand some of that nuance. I think in terms of employment outcomes, the numbers we show are pretty straightforward. Are you in the labor force looking for work? Are you employed? But some of the work that you have been showing us here shows that it gets deeper than that and trying to find the job fit for people.

Carolyn, I heard you say it is not just any job, but the right job. I wonder if you could just say more about... It sounds like there are more tailored employment goals for people. It’s not just “employed or not”. I don't know if you wanted to speak to that a little bit.

**Carolyn LeBrane Tilton:** I really need to say that we do not discourage a client from seeking what they are interested in. For example, if they have an interest in being a pilot, for example, we do not discourage that. We help them to walk through what that means. We try to get our clients to know that because you have a disability, that should not limit you in terms of the kind of employment that you are wanting to see. That’s where our coaching comes in, however, we help them to go through the steps that would be needed to obtain that particular job.

In terms of employment as well, remember, our clients are not only disabled, but in the majority of cases, they have a felony conviction. So, in Louisiana, and I'm sure in other states as well, there are some limitations as to the kind of work they can do. For example, they may not be able to get the kind of licensing that would be required to meet that employment goal. So, we really have to provide them with the kind of information that they are going to need to make the kind of decision that they are going to have to make, in terms of the employment that would best suit them.

**Megan Henly:** Thanks, Carolyn. I think we have time for one more question. Liz, if you would like to unmute and ask your question?

**Liz Weintraub:** Thank you. Thank you for your presentation. I might have missed this, I needed to step out of the room, but do you ever find employers discriminate against people, employers or prospective employers, because they are incarcerated?

**Carolyn LeBrane Tilton:** Alexander, did you want to take that one?

**Alexander Andreson:** I’m sorry, I didn't catch the tail end. Would you mind repeating it?

**Liz Weintraub:** Do you find people discriminate against people who are incarcerated just because...

**Alexander Andreson:** Yes, we do run into that sometimes, and we try to tackle it in the best way we can. We have legal advocates on our side that we can reach out to if we believe someone's rights have been ignored. We work with fair housing, for example, and something they are currently working on in Louisiana legislators is to ensure that applicants for housing know what kind of charges would result in a denial before they pay for that application cost, which would save our clients a lot of money and time if they already know they are not going to be approved for a housing application.

**Liz Weintraub:** Thank you.

**Megan Henly:** Thanks for the question, Liz. Wonderful. I will put this last slide up for now that shows some of our partner links and how to contact our office at disability.statistics@unh.edu if you have any follow-up questions for us about the numbers or that we can redirect to our guest speakers today. All of this information will be posted to our website after today's call.

Thank you very much to Liz Weintraub for stepping in today from AUCD, and Carolyn Lebrane Tilton, Alexander Henderson, I appreciate you taking about this work. It has been really great to hear about. We will sign off our webinar today. Hope you have a wonderful weekend, and we will see you for the midmonth call later this month in April. Thank you.