Season 9 - Episode 3 - 3/8/2024

**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/nTIDE. This site will also provide copies of the presentations, the speakers bios, full 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@uhu.edu or toll free at 866-538-9521 for more information, thanks for joining us and enjoy today's webinar.

**Andrew Houtenville:** Hi everybody. This is Andrew Houtenville from the University of New Hampshire. Just some tips on zoom. To select the speakers, Click on the up arrow and select your audio settings for close captioning. Click on the close caption button, and you can select show subtitles or you can view a running transcript. A little bit about nTIDE it occurs on the first Friday of each month with the release of the nTIDE Report. It's a joint effort of the University of New Hampshire, Kessler Foundation, and the Association of University Centers on Disabilities, AUCD. One other further note is that we do have a mid month nTIDE These days and we focus on specific segments of the population of people with disabilities.

Today's program will be in four parts. We'll have the nTIDE report numbers by me and John O'neal. Megan Henly was last month. We forgot to change that. She substituted for me, but she'll be doing next month so May as well keep the slides the same. Part two is nTIDE news with Denise Rozell from AUCD. Then we have a guest speaker, Patricia Gill from the National Restaurant Associations Education Foundation. Then we have Q and A as part four. So I'll turn it over to John for an introduction to the numbers.

**John O'Neill:** Thank you, Andrew. So the monthly nTIDE Report, as Andrew indicated, it's press release with infographics. We're looking at the latest employment statistics coming out of the Bureau of Labor Statistics. It uses data from the jobs report, which is released on the first Friday of each month. Andrew skillfully scrapes all the data from that report and then we manipulate it to be ready for this particular webinar.

Next slide, the US. the Current Population Survey from the US. Bureau of Labor Statistics, is the source of the official unemployment rate, which the media often makes so much of. We don't report the unemployment rate simply because it can mean different things at different times. But we do report the employment to population ratio and the employment participation rate. It's the data is on civilians ages 16 to 64, not living in institutions. It's been available since 2008 onward, since the Census Bureau, and specifically the US. Bureau of Labor Statistics added the six questions on disability to their surveys.

It's not seasonally adjusted the data as of yet. For people with disabilities, that's why we used to compare, we still do, but it's in the background a little bit. The current month to the same month. Last year since COVID, we've been reporting the month to month outcomes which have revealed some very interesting trends. And we continue to report upfront the non seasonally adjusted date of month to month. But in the nTide report, we do include the year-to-year statistics. Andrew, back to you.

**Andrew Houtenville:** Okay. Great. Thank you, John. The numbers. Before I do that, I just want to promote our annual disability statistics conference, which will be held March 28. The in person is already full. We got a nice response and unfortunately, it's already fully booked. But we also have an online version. I have endeavored to make the online experience equal to the in-person experience. It's actually going to be like a Zoom broadcast with a live studio audience. The online experience will be as similar as we can make it to the face-to-face experience. The employment population ratio. Here are the numbers from, as John mentioned, going back to 2008, when they first started asking the six-question sequence, that's in many of the federal surveys, we have a decline during the Great Recession.

The decline for people with disabilities lasted quite a bit longer in 2014 compared to 2010 for people without disabilities. Then there's slow progress. There's actually a brief period, 2016-2018 where there was a narrowing of the gap. The slope of this line is steeper for people with disabilities, that gap was actually narrowing. We have COVID, we have the COVID lockdown, which was a two-month recession in terms of economic growth. Of course, we had all the lockdown stipulations and there's a slow recovery from that, The pandemic, people with disabilities actually recovered to pre pandemic levels first, well before people without disabilities, like a year and a half before people with disabilities reached since the recovery up to the pandemic level, pre pandemic level employment, people with disabilities have pushed back, pushed into historic grounds over the year of 2023.

We saw a continued bump up not as fast as 2002 and not as fast as 2001, but still a bump up for people with disabilities, we saw a little leveling off in 2003, but we're still reaching historic highs. November was the historic high, but over the last few months, we've had a decline. In January it was 37.8%. This is 37.8% of people with disabilities were employed, and so this is ages 16 to 64 as John referenced. Compared to 74.2% for people without disabilities ages 16 to 64. Still a long, long gap. Such a gap that this graph has a break in the intercept. It's much further apart but it would be hard to depict in one page if we didn't leave that gap.

All right, so drum roll John. Okay. So, a slight increase for people without disabilities, only four tenths of a percentage point for people with disabilities, there was a pretty steep decline. Almost 1.1 percentage points, a pretty big decline, not an unprecedented decline. If we look back over the course of the last decade or so, there are times where this decline occurs. This is likely the biggest decline we've seen since COVID bottoming out. We do expect a sawtooth pattern based on seasonality. That's pretty well depicted for people without disabilities, but it's a little more saw tooth for people with disabilities. That is largely, the difference is largely due to sample size that I think it's about 2,000 observations, 2,000 people with disabilities answering the survey at any given moment. This is sample statistics; we're drawing a sample and we're always going to see variation from month to month. My best guess is that next month we'll see an increase. We'll see that revision back to the trend.

On average, we've had this upward trend that's tapering off a little bit in 2003, but we'll revert back to that mean back to that trend if we have another big decrease that would take some careful consideration. Whenever I see two big increases or two big decreases in a row, I start thinking something might be wrong with the underlying data. Maybe there was a shift in the sampling pattern or something that I'm not aware of. But I wouldn't take this as terrible news, Of course, I'd rather see it go up. It went down a little bit last month and a lot this month. Is it seasonality? Maybe. Is it samples? yeah. Sample size. Just regular variation because we don't have the full census of the population. Long story short, I'd rather see it go up. Of course.

Let's see. Labor force participation. Labor force participation rate is the percentage not only who are employed, but also actively looking for work. This pulls those two groups together to give a higher percentage than the employment population ratio. And it's a little more muted in terms of the overall time trends. People with disabilities have been reaching highs. Similar pattern to the pandemic to what we saw for the employed. One big difference is that during the pandemic lockdown, people with disabilities really didn't see a huge decrease. People with disabilities stayed in the labor market during the pandemic. They may not have been employed, but they stayed looking and actively looking for work or on furlough. Well, we see a decline last month, and a decline this month, small decline this month.

For me, this is sometimes a more important indicator because while we saw a big decline for employment, people with disabilities on net stayed in the labor market, stayed in the labor market, people with disabilities stay in the labor market. That also suggests for me that the trend, this huge, massive decline, that this is something that's statistically related, and that hopefully we can expect a continued growth in 2024. Yeah, here's February. February declined again so two or three months of decline after a fairly good year in 2004.

Again, people with disabilities are staying in the labor market. We're still hovering around historic highs. I wouldn't call this; we'll see how 2024 plays out before actually saying something about what's going on in general. All right, so I'm going to turn it over to Denise Rozell. Denise. Take it away everybody.

**Denise Rozell:** Hey everybody. So, we always start out with a federal policy update. I actually have a number of things today to share on policies. Let's get right to it. First one, and I've been literally checking my phone, and somebody will correct me if I'm wrong, but theoretically, the, the government shuts down at midnight if the Congress and the President doesn't sign appropriation bills for agriculture, transportation/HUD, military construction/VA Energy/Water the House passed their version. The Senate is, to my knowledge right now, working on it.

 I don't anticipate a shutdown, but we'll have to wait and see the rest of the budget, which I won't say that people with disabilities don't have money in the things that are being looked at today. Because of course, there are things in there. Transportation, housing, all kinds of things. But the labor HHS, appropriations bills have to be passed and signed by the President by March 22 or that stuff shuts down. Everybody's working on it. I don't have an answer.

If something happens before the end of the call, I'll let you know. I've said this before, but this does not include Ukraine, Israel Border Security. That money is not in these bills, and both with the State of the Union address last night and the President's budget comes out next week. Even though we don't have FY 2024 finished, we are starting on FY 2025 appropriations. That's just the way it is right now.

I'm going to talk a little bit more about sub minimum wage. On a couple of slides I've got coming up, but I want to make sure I gave you again the bill numbers for the transformation to Competitive Integrated Employment Act. This one was introduced a while back now and I think there might be a real possibility for it to pass. This is the one that does away with sub minimum wage and provides grants to states to be able to change their business models where there is some minimum wage, et cetera. It's a both.

And there are some bills out there that simply get rid of some minimum wage. This one is both the primary sponsor, Senator Casey in the Senate and Representative Kathy McMorris Rogers in the House. We are hopeful right now, knock on wood. If you haven't reached out to your senators and representatives about this bill, please do this is an important one. A Senate Companion Bill to something called the Words Matter Act got introduced just recently back in 2010. A bill passed called Rosa's Law.

Ross Law did away with the words “mental retardation” in a bunch of a bunch of federal legislation. But not all of it. And I love this story because the whole reason it happened was because literally of Rosa and her brother. It was a thing that came up from the grassroots. And they said, wait a minute, I don't like these words. I don't want this here; I don't think we should be saying this anymore. And it passed first in Maryland and then federally this bill. And there's been a House Bill for a while. The Senate Bill just got introduced. And it would change the rest of the federal statutes so that the word mental retardation is not used. Instead, we'll be using intellectual disability. This is an important one for a lot of components in the disability community.

Okay. Next slide Andrew. Another thing. Senator Shaheen from New Hampshire has introduced something called the Supporting Disabled Entrepreneurs Act. This is the bill number for it, people with disabilities. Interestingly enough, and I didn't realize this, people with disabilities and self-employment and small business development are nearly twice that of people without disabilities, which is interesting. The bill, this bill in and of itself, would require the SBA, the Small Business Administration, to create a coordinator for disabled small business concerns, collect demographic data on people who are part of the Small Business Administration programs, which we don't have right now, and report out on that.

This is an important one too in terms of employment for people with disabilities and a variety of types of employment. As we talk about, everybody gets the choice of how they get employed and so should people with disabilities. So, this will help encourage more of the entrepreneurs and self-employment in the disability community via the Small Business Administration.

Next slide, Andrew. This is a couple of new bills on accessible voting and participation, the Accessible Voting Act. And there's a companion bill, there's a House and Senate Bill. It creates an Election Assistance Commission, Office of Accessibility, a national resource center on accessible voting, and a national voter accessibility website. It builds on all the work that happened way back in the day around motor voters, how you can vote, what the options are. It also provides some grants to states to improve voting access. Again, this is Senator Casey and Senator Klobuchar are the two leads on this and in the House Representative Scanlon from Pennsylvania.

And then there's another one, again our friend Senator Casey, removing access barriers to running for elected office. This is an interesting one too because of course, this is true for people who are running for office or who are hired by campaigns. People with disabilities are discouraged from doing that in large part. Well, not in large part. In part because anything that you earn applies to your eligibility and your benefits, right? We have this conversation all the time about how you measure what you earn against and how that affects your benefits and your eligibility. This says that filing to run for our office and campaign work received for working on campaigns doesn't count toward eligibility or benefits.

I like this one. It's one that's I mean, I don't know if it'll pass, but it's an easy fix. And it makes it much more possible for people with disabilities to run for office and to be active in campaigns. And then they don't have to just volunteer for campaigns. That's the other thing. Let's be honest. How often do we encourage people with disabilities simply to volunteer to do something as if their time is not worth money? That's just ludicrous. Anyway, this one I like a lot.

Next slide, I think. I'm not sure I said this last month on this call. If I did, it literally happened that day. We had a conversation about the Census Bureau before they were going to update some of the questions about disability. They did not interact with the disability community to ask them what we thought about those questions. In fact, the way that they were going to "update or change" the disability questions on the American Community Survey, would have frankly made huge changes as severely underestimated the number of people with disabilities. It was based on functionality, it was based on, you know, like levels of functionality. And only the "highest" level of lack of functionality, if you will, would have been counted as disability. And that just, it didn't work. And nobody asked us.

**Andrew Houtenville:** And there's a little-known provision of the ACA where if the American Community Survey changes the questions, all the federal health surveys have to follow suit.

**Denise Rozell:** Oh, interesting. I didn't know that. That's oh my goodness.

**Andrew Houtenville:** So, it wouldn't have just been one survey, it would have been all health surveys.

**Denise Rozell:** And then that affects, in turn, if we underestimate the count, that in turn affects services and all of that stuff. So anyway, the disability community, and cheers to the community as a whole, really came together, reached out, filed comments. They had way more comments than they expected. And the Census Bureau came back and said, okay, we're not going to make these changes. They have recommitted, yes, Andrew. They have recommitted or committed to work with stakeholders going forward. When changes are suggested, it is still up to us as a community to come back and say, okay, what are you suggesting and what would the effect be? But at least this time we have stopped the changes. So, congrats to everybody in the community who did this work across the country. Okay.

Next slide. Yeah. Transportation. This one's really exciting at the bottom there. You can't really read all those slides. I'll figure that out. New air travel, DOT has announced proposed rules for approved air travel. And this has been a long time since it literally back to before the ADA in the Air Carrier Access Act. It will make it easier. And their comments due April 29, I am really urging everybody to go in and comment about this and how important this is and how these are good changes. Read the changes, see what you think.

But it makes it easier for DOT to hold airlines accountable when they damage or delay the return of a wheelchair. I mean, it makes it an automatic violation of the ACA to mishandle a wheelchair, which means it's lost, it's delayed, its damaged, stolen. It guarantees you a loaner wheelchair from the airline. You get to choose, which is a huge issue. You get to choose your preferred vendor for repairs or replacements. There's a complaint resolution officer available. And then it does annual training as well. We all have friends who have had unbelievable, truly, at times, unbelievable problems when the wheelchair has been damaged, when they've flown, and then trying to get that chair fixed and get the chair that is right for them.

Not any wheelchair is the same as any other wheelchair. All of that. This is a big deal thanks to Kelly Buckland who is at the Department of Transportation who has really pushed on this from the Fed side. But this is a big one. I really urge people to go in and comment because I think it'll be important, and these are important changes.

Next slide, Andrew. Let's see. Okay, so you know, and I've said this before. There are a variety of times when stuff just comes through my e mail box, all on one topic for one month. I don't anticipate what it is, but for some reason we probably because Transformation to Competitive Integrated Employment Act is actually looking possible right now. There are a number of things going on sub minimum wage that I want to raise for you. This one is by New America pennies on the dollar use of sub minimum wage for disabled workers across the United States. This is an updated version of it and what it does is it ranks states.

I am forever being asked by people about sub minimum wage in their state. How many people are on it? How does the state use it? What could we change in our state? What's the state doing? All of that state by state. What this does is rank states across four categories on employment and sub minimum wage. It's a great one to look at for your own state. It's a great one to share with your state and federal legislators because it looks at policy engagement. It looks at use of sub minimum wage, 2018-2023 in your state employment policy and funding initiatives and then support of financial security in your state. Really nicely done. Just updated in February and in a perfectly timed update.

Next one, next slide. Starbucks. I also suggest you go and pull this and look at this. Starbucks has a new two-page commitment to access and disability inclusion. First of all, one of the things that's most impressive to me when it went up, when I saw first on my Facebook page, a friend of mine immediately said, yeah, it would be really great if they would do changing adult changing tables in the bathrooms. I wish that was added to this. And immediately what are people working on? It said it's in there. It's in there. How often do we see somebody committing to that? It's a really nice outline that has to do with entrances, paths of travel, goods and services, restrooms, preparation, and back of house ambience. All of that in terms of creating inclusive spaces.

That's the first part, and then this is why I said sub minimum wage has popped up all over the place. Starbucks makes a commitment to supporting the ending of sub minimum wage and promoting competitive, integrated employment. Anytime we see companies who are willing to come out and say that big companies, I think it's really important and for Starbucks to do that is a big deal at this time. I was saying actually today that I'd love to have somebody from Starbucks come on and talk about this on one of our nTIDE calls. We'll see what we can do.

It talks about a policy change making sure that we advance ADA principles through the digital accessibility lens so tech stuff. And then it talks some about grants, tax credits, things that I'd like to see in public, private partnerships. And then they have a commitment to a diverse workforce. I would say to those of you print it out, first of all, say thank you to your local Starbucks the next time you go in that you love that this is there, and you're pleased to see it, and then hold folks accountable. That's the bottom line here. But it's a really nice, really short, and they have stuff about accessibility and inclusive spaces that I have not seen elsewhere, the hard stuff. So, I send that to you. Okay. Next one. Andrew.

**Andrew Houtenville:** Before you go on to the next one, Amy and Karen, we have a bot that actually submit comments, registers, and submit comments, so they've that system is active. If you could withdraw their registration, that would be helpful.

**Denise Rozell:** Oh, dear, thanks guys. This is another one. This is the folks at NCIL, the National Council on Independent Living, Autistic Stuff Advocates Network, ASAN, and AAPD, American Association of People With Disabilities, are doing a webinar about status these days of ending sub minimum wage, showing data, talking about. It's targeted toward disability folks, but it's also targeted toward the public. Why this is important, I gave you the link for that next slide Andrew.

 This is a new study. Elaine from Kessler pointed this out to me. It's a new study from the Boston Consulting Group on supporting diverse identities of people with disabilities. The original research, and no surprise, shows that people with disabilities feel lower levels of inclusion, experience more harassment, and discrimination, feel less psychologically safe on the job.

The new analysis of the US data, again, I guess not surprising, but it is nice to have the data that multi marginalized people, when we start talking about intersectionality, feel those negative outcomes get amplified. It looks specifically at BIPOC women, it looks at LGBT+ community folks, it looks at other marginalized groups of people with disabilities. And they have an index, which I won't try to explain, but anyway called the Bliss Index, I think, that they used to rate all this stuff and then it makes some recommendations for how to improve and making sure that people with disabilities are included in DEI. So this one is interesting too.

 Next slide, Andrew. I think I'm almost done. PEAT. Our friends at PEAT. The Partnership on Employment and Accessible Technology sponsored by ODEP, funded by ODEP, have some things on state digital equity plans and how to make sure that you include people with disabilities in planning these state digital equity plans. As we know, this is a huge issue to make sure everybody has access to digital equality and the internet and all of that. This is a nice one that they've put together, particularly if you're in a rural area. And some of the places where, well, not just rural also in some cities, this is a nice one to look at. I definitely suggest you go pull it if that's something you're interested in.

Next slide, Andrew. And then a webinar to share, and this has an accompanied publication. This is by EARN, again, another one of the ODEP funded projects. And this one is on local partnerships. Building local partnerships as a way of hiring and keeping workers with disabilities. It has people who have done it from companies who have done it, talking about what those partnerships are, who they've partnered with, how you expand the talent pool, what to look for. And it's from people who have actually done it. I thought this one looks nice. And there's an accompanying publication that has a bunch of other resources and strategies, and guidance and some additional case studies that weren't in the first one, that aren't on the webinar. This is another one I thought was really good that I wanted to give you.

I think that's my last one. Yes. Next slide, Andrew? Yeah. I now get to introduce Patricia Gill who is the Director of Workforce Development at the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation. She has over 30 years of experience in federal grant administration, youth program management, and technical assistance. She's also the proud foster to adopt mother of an amazing daughter, a smart puppy, and a spunky rabbit. I love this description, Patricia. I'm going toss it to you.

**Patricia Gill:** Thank you. Hello everyone and thank you Denise. There were some amazing resources you mentioned. We grabbed a few ourselves, including that new statement by Starbucks. I'm here today to talk about our Hospitality Pathways Program, which is a signature employment grant from our friends at the Kessler Foundation. I'm just going to share these slides later, but we're going to go over the deliverables, the partners, the approach, and most exciting, some of the key learnings that we've had come out of it.

Quick overview. As I mentioned, this is a Signature Employment Grant from the Kessler Foundation. It's a two-year grant that we started in January 2023. Our end goal is to have 100 participants enroll, 75 complete training, and 50 be employed. Outside of that, though, eventually all of these resources will go to our 30-state network called Restaurant Ready and that engages thousands of individuals who are entering or reentering employment through opportunities in hospitality. We worked with a subject matter expert to apply a universal design approach to our restaurant ready program, which is our work readiness program to our employer resources, and to eventually our apprenticeship training. We're looking at what are the gaps, what are some great practices that people are already doing, and what are the best ways to provide access to the materials, to the training and our pathways? And we piloted these materials with three CBO partners who are already enrolling individuals with disabilities.

But eventually, as I said, this will go out to all of our partners, including those who are serving individuals with disabilities, but probably not intentionally or as well as they would like to be. And it will also go out to our industry partners and employers as we are The National Restaurant Educational Foundation, we do have state restaurant associations in all 50 states, and we have partners in industry in all states. Eventually, we believe this will have national impact.

Some of the deliverables we want to look at what are the gaps. We want to come up with some frameworks and we're going to create what we're calling a tool kit. We will have some feedback from our initial pilot. And then also we're going to do a little bit larger pilot. And then eventually, we'll have our final report, which shows all of our progress and performance measures. Our partners and some of them are on the call today, we are working with partners in three states, Colorado, Delaware, and Michigan. In each state, we're working with the State Restaurant Association, which gives us our connection to industry.

And then with a community-based organization that is already enrolling participants with disabilities. In Colorado, we're working with the Colorado Restaurant Association and Skills Academy, which is actually now called Skills Enrichment Center. And in Delaware, we're working with the Delaware Restaurant Association and the Food Bank of Delaware. And one of our case managers from the Food Bank of Delaware is also on call, T. Sanders, She's amazing. And in Michigan, we are working with the Michigan Restaurant and Lodging Association, which recently changed their name to the Michigan Hospitality Foundation, I believe, so we'll update that. And then Peckham is serving as both our subject matter expert as well as our community-based organization. And we have at least three of our partners from Peckham on.

I think we have Calli, Emily, and Nick, and if anybody else joined, I apologize if I missed you. I should also mention that some friends from our team are also on the call. Jennifer, Katherine, Alex like to give a little shout out to the team.

Next slide. The way we approach this is using universal design. Trying to think about how we can have access for as many people as possible before we go to individual accommodations. As we are designing our programs, our materials, our processes, really thinking about what is the way that we can open up to as many people as possible. Just a quick comment about universal design. It started as an architectural concept and it was really thinking about spaces, your typical kind of ramps and those sorts of things. But as we know, universal design gives better access for everybody.

For the example, street, curb cuts were originally supposed to be for people with wheelchairs to be able to access the sidewalk, but as we know people use it for skateboards, strollers, when you're pulling your rolling luggage. The idea of universal design building out of that architectural concept is that something you design is accessible to as many people as possible. Regardless of their specific disability, ability, need for the day. This universal design, physical approach, architectural approach is also now can be applied to materials and programs, and that's universal design for learning. So, we really wanted to apply that to all of our work. Giving people multiple ways to receive information. So not the standard just reading it in a classroom, but being able to see it, hear it, feel it, attach meaning to it, what does it mean to them?

And then different ways to demonstrate mastery. And this is really important, because sometimes people think, oh, if you're adapting this for a group, you're lowering your standards, you're changing your content, you're changing your competencies. We're not doing any of that. We're just having different ways you can show competency. And I think this is really easy to explain in the restaurant culinary concept, right? Because we don't want to know if somebody can write a test about making some good food, or can talk about it, or can you write a paper about it. We want to know if they can make the good food. A lot of times competency was attached more to formal test taking than actually the ability to do something. We always clarify, we're not lowering what the standard is or what competency is. We are just increasing the ways you can show that competency.

Then we really looked at how are the innovative ways that our current CBO's are doing this with our restaurant ready curriculum. A quick overview of the timeline. We spent January to June just talking to our community-based organizations and state restaurant associations, really getting just a lay of the land. Then the second half of the year, we really started to gather tools and practices from them and from the field and begin to put together the tool kit. Just recently, we have a beginning, solid framework for our tool kit. And we've shared it back out with our sites, and we are about to share it out with a larger cohort.

And what's exciting about the next cohort are that these are people who are including people with disabilities. But they're not necessarily disability programs. They're not necessarily disability program, I'm sorry, experts. They are our restaurant ready programs serving a variety of participants. And this is a really great way to test the tool kit with a larger group. Before we send it out to everyone. And we are going to debut all these materials at our Hospitality Pathways Conference, which happens in July. And that's where it will be shared with all 30 states and with more people in the industry. Next slide please.

**Andrew Houtenville:** Sorry. There we go.

**Patricia Gill:** So, some of the things we were shooting for in year one is we wanted to enroll half of our full hundreds. We wanted to enroll 50, and we actually enrolled 73.

**Andrew Houtenville:** I'm impressed.

**Patricia Gill:** Yeah, and we have more. We have a data system that captures gender, race, ethnicity, disability, age, et cetera. A few other things. We wanted to have at least 75% of those enrolled actually receive training. And we've had all 73 receive training. Then we said that at least half would be employed, and we've had more than that already be employed in the first year. We look at the hours they're being employed, the wage that they're receiving, the specific employer they work for, and the title or role that they're fulfilling.

Next slide. Just a little bit closer, look at who our participants are and how we're enrolling in each site. Each site was asked to enroll at least 17 people in the first year. And as you can see, they all exceeded that enrolling about 20. And then Skills Richmond Center in Colorado actually enrolled 35 participants. In just the first year, we've had slightly more females and males, 55% to 45% The majority of our participants are 20 to 29 years old, but we do have a few that are 15 to 19 and even some who are 30 years old. We have five people that are 40 years old, and we even have one person who is over 50.

**Andrew Houtenville:** That's not such a bad thing.

**Patricia Gill:** I'm in there myself. And then we had a wide range of disabilities. I will say that the number totals more than 100% because we did have some participants who disclosed multiple and co-occurring disabilities. And this is all based on participant disclosure in which category they chose for their disability. More than half had cognitive or intellectual disabilities. A good number also had learning disabilities. A significant number also had mental health needs or psychiatric disabilities. And then we had a few also with physical mobility or vision. Just a couple that chose not to disclose, and that is always their choice. And then, again, we wanted 75% of the number that they enrolled to be trained.

As you can see in, I think every site, they actually had all of the participants come to and complete the training. That's really nice because a lot of times someone enrolls but then actually able to come and it's really great to see this very high level of participation. And then obviously, we are a workforce development employment program. Our end goal is to have everybody working who would like to work. So far, we wanted to have at least 50% be employed, and we've exceeded that number as well. The split says full time and part time, but for us working more than half time jumps into full time. If people are working 20 more hours, it says on here full time, the average wages were about $15 for the people who are working more than 20 hours, and about $14 for those who are working less than 20 hours.

Although wage being captured, as I'm sure you are aware with the service industry is not the full amount of money that they're actually making. They're mostly making a little more than that, but that's the wage. That's reported on their paycheck. So, some of the places that our participants are working, we have them working as a dietary aide in, at a healthcare facility.

We have one young lady who's actually become a store manager at Subway. She is one of the ones who is also in our apprenticeship program and started out being hired to work at just the counter but has now actually moved up and become a store manager. It's amazing. And ice cream shop, Mcdonald's, Saint Gabes School as a lunch server. And 80% of our participants did go into employment in industry. But we always have participants follow their interests. So, we do have some that have gone other interest.

I know there's one young lady who really loves animals like myself. And so, she went to work for a pet store. We had someone go work at Meijer's, and Meijer's does have a food department, but she ended up wanting to work in the fashion department. And again, we believe that the skills that you gain in hospitality are completely transferable and can be used to further you wherever you want to go. And we always want people to go where they want to go. And somebody loved landscaping. That's great too. All right, next slide, please.

Some of the great strategies and key learnings. First of all, we have these great cross site focus groups with our community-based organizations from all three states. One unexpected outcome was that these are all individuals who work daily with people with disabilities. So, we were bringing them together to more gather their great strategies to put into this tool kit.

But a huge part of each focus group was them all talking to each other saying, well, I do this, how do you do that? What's that resource? and writing it down, just seeing that even people who are experts want to get more resources and talk to other people and try to do better work. That was really great to see and to see that sometimes we're putting together this tool kit for the future. But they were grabbing a lot of the resources and taking them and using them the next day. Some of the general lessons.

And I'm going to try to speed up a little bit here. As the individualized approach, everyone knows that, those things really need to be hands on. They did great jobs of creating work like environments in the classroom, having a practice cafe. It's really important for our participants to have agency and ownership for them to say, this is my disability if they want to or don't want to. Or just say more importantly, this is what I need to do best. And to be able to say that in both the classroom and when they go to work. And that employers really need education and support as well. We found that they all want to do the right thing, and they're worried about saying the wrong thing. And they really appreciated modeling and a site visit to help them be set up for a success. Next slide.

We also, another great unexpected outcome was that every time we even mentioned that we have this project, we had people say, oh, I want to be involved. I want to know what you're doing. I want to hear more about it, I want to share. So, we ended up just convening a summit in a conference. We were already having our annual conference and there was so much interest that we added the summit. Some of the things that came out of the summit discussion were some of the main barriers to having inclusion throughout pathways were people not even understanding what the definition of disability was. Or that the various capabilities of people with disabilities and not knowing what accommodations were, how to do it, that things were not accessible, whether it was training, whether it was application processes, and that people didn't have examples of how to do it.

Right. I was excited that someone shared, that Denise I'm sorry, shared earlier, the Starbucks policy, we've been getting, the Mcdonald's policy, we found that a lot of smaller businesses in most restaurants like 70% are small mom and pop shops. They don't have an HR person; they don't have all that. We really needed to have industry leaders and innovators like Mcdonald's like Noodles and Company like Mazeria really share what they do to pull together promising practices, including this idea of going from DEI to DEIA, where accessibility is just part of business. And then to provide this playbook of practices or this toolkit which we're developing.

And so, in the future. Having more education and support for businesses, having training and coaching for both employees and employers, improving the process. And then you all have mentioned this, having more data, people are always like how many people with disabilities are employed, how are we doing, really having more data around that. Next slide.

Around mental health needs, we really found that some of the things that were working, both in the classroom and in the workplace, were having people be able to take a break, have a place where people can take a break. Having things like fidgets and other things that people can use to just release some stress. All the great stress balls and other things. Having breaks where people can call home, one of my coaches called it structured, unstructured time, where there's a time where you just break and have a brain break and have a little break and just put that in so that people aren't having to sneak to the side to do that. Breaking things into smaller chunks, allowing people to opt out of being called on or reading aloud or other participation things. And then thinking about ways to incorporate mindfulness. And I know we're actually doing that here in our workplace as well. Next slide please.

Another great strategy was just having this universal design facilitation checklist. It was something that all of our facilitators could just use as they're putting together their session to be sure that they've thought of everything from how they're presenting to the materials to the space. Next slide, another great tool that we developed is a post lesson debrief, where after they complete a session, they can just think back. Did everybody participate? Did I have different ways to share information and to document competency? Was the environment welcoming? Did everyone understand the language and terminology that I used? Did I have different ways that participants can give me feedback on how it went? This was really helpless as people thought about the next time they were going to do a session. Next slide, please.

We are putting this all into a fabulous tool kit. Some of the things that will be in there are like the approach I mentioned earlier, guides based on the type of activity you're doing. Like if you're doing a role play or group activity, what should you think about guides based on the different competency areas. Like if you're doing something about personal responsibility or communication, what should you be thinking about? Then we also will have some examples of modifications and I'm going to share some in a second. And then also some great resources around some of the government sites. You all have mentioned some disability sites where you can go to get accommodations, for example, for SERV Safe and other assessments. Next slide.

One example. I try to do this pretty quickly. There's a classroom activity for safety and sanitation where people were supposed to list ten different activities where you would need to wash your hands afterwards. It's very important in restaurants and food service to keep everything clean. And there was a young man who got a lot of anxiety around having to speak, to answer questions, and a lot of times didn't participate in the activities. And the facilitator incorporated something called Kahoot, which is just an online platform where you can throw answers in. This not only engaged the young man, but also engaged a lot of other participants who maybe don't want to shout out answers. And it also is fun. That's one quick way that someone adapted what would normally just be a group activity or right on the board activity into something where everybody could join in.

The next example is a workplace example. This was at a bakery in Michigan. And a young man who sometimes had trouble understanding written or verbal instructions. And the hiring manager added visual aids to the workstation about how things were to be prepared and also repeated the instructions several times. And then actually I think it was really great, they put the instructions on an iPad. And this way whenever he wanted, he could look back himself to see the instructions and other employees also could see the instructions and not have to ask.

And I know a lot of restaurants do post visual signs about how to prepare different items. I know they do that I believe at Subway and other places as well. And that works for people who have a hard time maybe understanding instructions, people that might be English as a second language. So, it works again, universal design for lots of people and you don't have to know the specific disability in order for pictures and an iPad to work for everyone. Next slide.

These are just some resources, these are already mentioned earlier, but we do share these in the tool kit. I do love EARN; they have a lot of resources for small businesses. Again, a lot of our restaurants don't have an HR department and a disability specialist. So, it's wonderful to have these accessible resources. Let's see. Yeah, we're adding new CBOs for the next cohort. We're going to have the tool kit hopefully finished by July for our big meeting and share it across the field.

We're continuing to partner with people. We're also presenting in May at the National Restaurant Show in Chicago, which is the largest restaurant conference, I think in the world. And they invited us to come and talk about this idea of universal design and access. So that's really exciting to be able to just really share this with the field. Thank you.

**Andrew Houtenville:** All right, so Patricia's email is on the screen. It's pgill@nraef.org Thank you Patricia I'm willing to stay over a bit if you're able to stay. Patricia. Patricia's nodding yes, I can put my video on. I'm really impressed with this work, and we'd love to have you back when the tool kits are ready to unveil it for us. I'm really impressed with your recruitment and I usually, I don't think I've ever been a part of or heard about a research project that recruited more people than was needed. That's a great testament to you and your partners who are all on the call, so I better say nice things.

Questions, let me quickly go to the Q and A. All right, so what about union representation and the involvement of the individuals? Isn't this part of self-advocacy? I'll just leave it as they wrote it, instead of putting my own spin on it.

**Patricia Gill:** I might need a little bit better.

**Andrew Houtenville:** What about the union representation and the involvement of individuals? This might be around self-advocacy, whether it's through the union movement, self-advocacy and disability self-advocacy. I have a different spin on it that there is no involvement of unions in this project, oh okay, the involvement of unions in this project. Has there been any thought or ideas about how to, you talked about employers needing support. The thing I always run into is disability etiquette. They want to do the right things but there's the etiquette. Have you thought about using unions as a way to promote universal design and all these aspects?

**Patricia Gill:** I think honestly, we are more than happy to work with anybody. We do have some apprenticeship groups we're working with. We have some various groups in the industry. I know there was a group that does training for unions, and I cannot remember which state they were in, they contacted us. And they are part of our restaurant ready family. It's really for us I guess at this point around the individual and supporting them and

**Andrew Houtenville:** So, you're doing training on the individual, but you know, employers are one target of needing support. That could be another part of being support.

**Patricia Gill:** I think that's a great idea. Yeah, right now the target developed and going to be a resource. We will probably do some, and this is just off the top of my head.

**Andrew Houtenville:** Is it a resource, sorry, is it a resource for individuals, workforce development, people, employers, union reps?

**Particia Gill:** Yes. Yes. Yeah. We are planning to have the tool kit. We will probably have it available on our website so that anybody can download it, and we will probably do a webinar or two to introduce it to people. And so, it's not like, oh, this group can have it and that group can't have it. We just really, it's been amazing the amount of interest. Like when we had the summit, we had people from the Department of Commerce, Department of Education. I think OCTA obviously ODEP and there's just so much interest on the federal level.

And then employers as large as McDonald's and Marriott, but then just also very small mom and pops just and then within our own house, the people on the side that do SERV Safe and our assessments were like, tell us what you're finding out, this is what we're doing, is there something else we can do? We are opening gates and lowering barriers so anybody who's interested we're happy to share with them. And yes, if unions are like we'd like to know more about this and help advocate forward or support it. I think that would be great. I hope that answers your question.

**Andrew Houtenville:** I'll have to remember, there was a gentleman out of California, maybe Arizona, that I was collaborating on in a grant proposal. And at some point, I can look him up and see he was really, he came from the union side, then the disability side. So it was a really interesting connection, I can put you in touch with him. One question, this goes to the idea of self-advocacy. And it goes back to the literature actually on male/female wage differentials. And some of the work that's been done on advocating for yourself, certainly in wage negotiations from day one on the job offer. Some have pointed to men's more willingness or I think sometimes ignorance, sometimes being just stumbling into, you know, push, promoting themselves, just speaking from my own personal experience.

**Patricia Gill:** Oh no, it goes across the board. Even applying for a job, if a woman has 75 or 80% of the skill, she'll still say, should I apply? And if a man now he'll usually apply, it's just that statistic. So disclosure has really been a big discussion area for us, especially if you're working with a lot of young adults. They come out of having been in school where they had an IEP or a 504 that followed them. They didn't have to say anything, a lot of them didn't even what was on their IEP or 504. And going from where it's a requirement to, it's a possibility if you asked for it, that's a big transition, and knowing what they need to be successful.

We really focus on that. Whether you want to say your specific disability or diagnosis, which again is just a diagnosis, is not as important as if you are able to say in order to be successful at this job, I need bump, bump, bump and to know how to say it, even on the employer's side, a lot of employers are doing like Mcdonald's now has all of their accommodations pool, it's all in one big pool so that it's not up like an individual operator thinking, oh, this is going to cost me.

**Andrew Houtenville:** Even across the franchises, they have a centralized accommodation fund.

**Patricia Gill:** That way everybody can apply, and it's not up to an individual store owner to think about, oh, I don't know if I can do this or I can afford it. It's a large pool. And I think that's an interesting approach and just making it, normalizing, right? A general expectation that if you need something, you asked for it and we've got this pool for it that's nice to see.

**Andrew Houtenville:** Yeah, centralized accommodation fund has always been pushed as a way that the line managers and the people doing the hiring and training don't bear the brunt. So that could filter down to the worker as well, not being afraid to ask because you know you're not going to, that it's a corporate for big places like McDonald's. Interesting.

**Patricia Gill:** It also takes the manager or supervisor out of the process of having to introduce it, and I don't know about it. And having to be an expert in something that they just may not be an expert and they might not even have ideas for what accommodations could be.

**Andrew Houtenville:** Right. You know, you pushed EARN, I've always liked JAN, the job accommodation network. I love that. I recently had, you know, I hadn't been to their website in a few years, and they've really upgraded it where it's not just disability type but it's the job requirement. You may have different disabilities, but the job requirement is the same. And how do you augment that requirement or the supports around that requirement? David Gray, a guy who has now passed away, former director of Neidler, man who had many wheelchairs destroyed by the airline industry. He wanted to create a bank of videos, and this is before TikTok. The idea is to learn from others how to manage a requirement with the skills and function of the individual as well. Well, this is great stuff. I'm really excited. Particularly, I remember when we talked earlier this year, Patricia and I and some others at the National Restaurant Association Education Foundation and Kessler Foundation met.

I was also very impressed with your work that's being focused around mental health. I'd love to hear you guys get a grant from Kessler to study supporting individuals with depression, anxiety, and other mental health related considerations. Because I'd imagine that the restaurant association, restaurant industry is right at the forefront of entry level jobs and how people prove themselves on their resume. I was a dishwasher for many years. That, being open to that, some of the things you learned in the classroom could be applied in the workplace, such as the breaks and stuff like that. I don't see any other questions. Someone asked if you have a program in Florida.

**Patricia Gill:** We do not have sites in Florida right now, but anybody who's interested in the resources can have them. We have 30 states, but Florida has not yet one of them. Although we have had some conversations, 30 states, we're moving on up. Mental health is a big discussion in our industry right now. Coming back post COVI, and customers yelling at service individuals and people coming back, you know, being front line, you cannot do de-escalation training. And you can't serve food necessarily by Zoom.

**Andrew Houtenville:** No, that's right.

**Patricia Gill:** One of the industries, restaurants, lodging, et cetera, that had to go back in person pretty quickly. And there's just been a lot of a rise in mental health needs and anxiety and all of those things. So that's a huge area of discussion. We worked on something called, and I'm going to get the name wrong, it was a mental health ally tool. And it was a tool to help industry be a mental health ally for employees. And it came out of that need.

**Andrew Houtenville:** Maybe present that sometime in the future. Patricia Gill: Hey, you know, I thought about that when she was saying thinking about mental health in the future. That is some work we have been involved in and we definitely want to be more involved in.

 Right. College age students. If people aren't aware, campuses are, especially around anxiety disorders, depression was first to come to the campuses and set up services around it. But anxiety disorder amongst our student body is really high. Universities are really screaming, particularly post Covid lockdown. Covid is still going. I don't want to say end of the pandemic. And also, someday talk about long Covid too because I'm sure your industry is coming into that as well.

**Patricia Gill:** Definitely.

**Andrew Houtenville:** All right. Well, any closing comments, Patricia?

**Patricia Gill:** Yes, I enjoyed this call and I learned so much at the beginning about we always love disability data. Coworker and I were emailing each other during that part saying, oh it's so interesting in the post comeback. Yeah, the data is just amazing. And then all the great resources. Thank you so much for having us and I'm happy to converse with anybody following the call who has suggestions or questions. Thank you.

**Andrew Houtenville:** Great. All right, thanks everybody and have a good weekend.