

Louisiana Employment Resource Guide

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Purpose

Louisiana's state government has adopted an Employment First (EF) goal and embraced this goal for all people with disabilities in the State. That employment is the primary outcome for all people of working age in the State. These efforts in Louisiana are part of a larger national effort to advance employment of individuals with disabilities through policy, legislation, advocacy, and systems change.

Louisiana's EF goal is to help and encourage all adults of working age to find and sustain employment in typical jobs with competitive compensation that are fully integrated into the workplace. We know that people with disabilities make valuable contributions to business throughout the State and thrive and increase their income and independence once they enter the workforce. The purpose of this resource guide is to provide knowledge, information and awareness of programs, supports and services that can help you, or someone you support, enter and succeed in the work world. This guide will also guide you to resources that can help you learn more about work as an option, your rights in the workplace, and the incentives that enable you to work and maintain important benefits.

We hope this guide will be useful to you and the families and professionals who support you as you explore the possibilities that work offers and as you pursue a job or career.

How to Use This Guide

This guide is divided into six sections that summarize resources to meet a variety of employment related questions and concerns. These areas include: Looking for Work; Exploring the World of Work; Transition from School to Work; Benefits and Work; Advocacy and Rights, and Employment First Policy Resources. These summaries will provide links and references to pages that describe - in more detail - the supports and services that a particular resource or agency can offer you.

For example, if you read the page on 'Looking for Work,' you will find a list and description of agencies or resources that may be able to help you with your search. If you are using this guide digitally, you can click on the name of any of these resources, and it will bring you to a page that describes more about that resource. You can download any of the summary pages and any back-up page to create your own individualized resource guide.

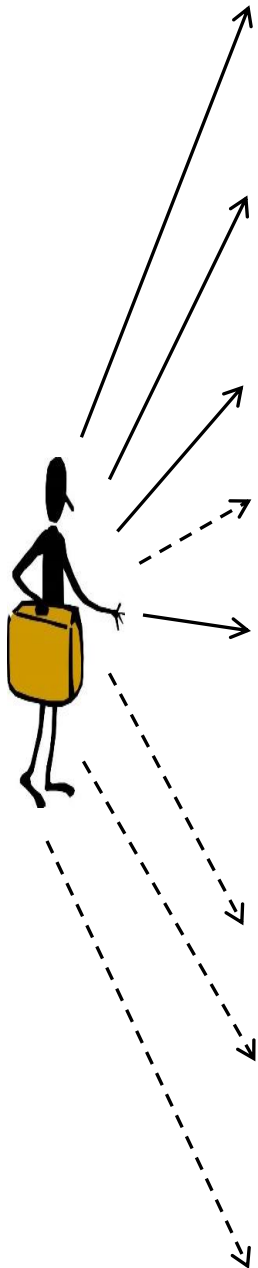
You will also find, in the front of this guide, an easy to use graphic that provides an "at-a-glance" look at the resources available to people looking for or thinking about work. The graphic can lead you directly to both pages in the guide and links to websites for each service.

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“At-a-Glance” - Louisiana Employment Pathway Possibilities

Help Finding Work	Model/Services	Website
LOUISIANA REHABILITATION SERVICES	Supported Employment	http://www.laworks.net/WorkforceDev/LRS/LRS_Rehabilitation.asp
	Customized Employment	
	Pre-ETS	
	Time-Limited – Direct Placement	
MEDICAID Employment & Vocational	NOW Waiver	http://www.ldh.la.gov/index.cfm/page/382
	ROW Waiver	http://www.ldh.la.gov/index.cfm/page/383
	Supports Waiver	http://www.ldh.la.gov/index.cfm/page/384
SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION	Ticket to Work	https://www.ssa.gov/work/
	SSA Work Incentives	https://www.ssa.gov/disabilityresearch/workincentives.htm
LOUISIANA CIVIL SERVICE	PT/FT Jobs, test accommodations, test exemptions	https://www.civilservice.louisiana.gov/
WORK INCENTIVES PLANNING & ASSISTANCE – WIPA	Impact of wages on SSA and other benefits	<p>South: http://www.laworks.net/Downloads/LRS/EmploymentResourceServices_2018.pdf#page=35</p> <p>North: http://www.laworks.net/Downloads/LRS/EmploymentResourceServices_2018.pdf#page=38</p>
LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION		https://www.louisianabelieves.com/
LOUISIANA WORKFORCE COMMISSION	Job Placement Assistance, Resume Portfolio Assistance, Job Search, Registered Apprenticeships & Pre-Apprenticeships	http://www.laworks.net/
SELF EMPLOYMENT & SMALL BUSINESS	Financial Institutions	https://www.branchspot.com/la/
	SSA Work Incentives – PASS Plan	https://www.ssa.gov/work/WIPA.html



-----> All Louisianans
 —————> Agency eligibility required

Looking for Work

If you are looking for work, you can join hundreds of people who have found satisfying jobs matched to their abilities and interests, often with the help of resources available to people with and without disabilities. Some questions you may be asking are: Who can help me find a job? Can I get support to help me learn and keep my job? Are there job-training programs that can help me get a job?

Here are resources that may be able to help you. Some of these resources are available only to particular groups of people. Others are available to everyone. If one service is not available or not right for you, use this list to explore other resources which may be just what you need.

If you want more information about these resources, click on the link included, and you will link to a more complete description of the services or resources offered.

Louisiana Rehabilitation Services: Vocational Rehabilitation is a State program that helps persons with disabilities obtain the skills and other resources they need to get a job, keep a job, and develop a lifetime career. Learn more at http://www.laworks.net/workforcedev/lrs/lrs_rehabilitation.asp and in [*What You Need to Know: Louisiana Rehabilitation Services.*](#)

Also, see ***Knowing the Road***, an easy to read guide to Louisiana Rehabilitation Services on the website for the Advocacy Center for Louisiana at www.advocacyla.org.

Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities: For people who meet the definition of an intellectual and/or developmental disability, OCDD is a State agency that has services to assist you in deciding what job is right for you, learning skills to help you get a job as well as locating and maintaining a job. Learn more at <http://ldh.la.gov/index.cfm/page/132> and in [*What You Need to Know: Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities.*](#)

First Episode Psychosis (FEP) Programs: If you are an individual who has recently experienced a first episode of psychosis and are between the ages of 15-30, you may be able to access support and service through one of four First Episode Psychosis (FEP) programs in Louisiana. The FEP programs help individuals to stay in school or work and can also assist individuals to enroll in school or obtain employment. Learn more at <http://www.ldh.la.gov/index.cfm/page/94>) and in [*What You Need to Know: Office of Behavioral Health.*](#)

Louisiana’s Business and Career Solutions Centers: These are career centers operated by the Louisiana Workforce Commission and a host of other partners designed to meet the employment and training needs of all Louisiana residents. Regardless of your current employment status, Business and Career Solutions Centers offer a variety of employment and training services to help you get that first job, enter a new career, or help you advance within a career pathway. Our Business and Career Solutions Centers are accessible to people with disabilities. Learn more at <http://www.laworks.net/> and at http://www.laworks.net/Downloads/WFD/B&CSC_Contacts.pdf and in [*What You Need to Know: Louisiana’s Business and Career Solutions Centers.*](#)

Ticket to Work Program: The Ticket program supports career development for people ages 18 through 64 who receive Social Security disability benefits (SSI or SSDI) and want to work. Employer Networks are set up to provide guidance and support to individuals as they look for work. Learn more at <https://choosework.ssa.gov/about/how-it-works/index.html> and in [*What You Need to Know: Ticket to Work.*](#)

Civil Service Opportunities in State Government: Louisiana state agencies are committed to ensuring that everyone is given an equal opportunity to begin a career with the state of Louisiana and strives to be a model for closing the gap between the higher unemployment rate for people with disabilities compared to the rate for those people who do not possess any disabilities. Learn more at <http://www.jobs.louisiana.gov/> and in [*What You Need to Know: Louisiana Civil Service.*](#)

Self-Employment & Entrepreneurship: Self-employment may be an option for individuals seeking a new or better career. Self-employment can provide the employment flexibility that some individuals might need. Starting a business requires many supports and steps. In addition to flexibility, this option provides greater options in features such as work hours, tasks, type of work, and earnings. Self-employment and entrepreneurship among individuals with disabilities has helped foster an array of partnerships at the federal, state, and local levels to encourage access to funding and resources to assist individuals with disabilities interested in these alternatives to traditional employment. See a list of resources at <https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/SelfEmploymentEntrepreneurship.htm>.

Taking Steps Toward Employment: Learning More about the Work World

What if you are not sure how you fit into the work world?

If you have been in a facility based pre-vocational workshop, you may only know this one option. Employment in the community may seem exciting and offer a better life but may also be a bit scary. Then again, you may have recently graduated from school and are trying to figure out whether you are ready to look for work or what kind of work is a good match for you. If you are just exiting school, or if you may have been in a facility-based day program, or in a community based day services program, and would like to think about work as a next step and get some exposure to the work world, this section will tell you about resources and programs that can help you think about work and what kind of work you might want to do. If you want to learn more about any of these resources click on the link included after each program description, and it will take you to the page to learn more about the services or opportunities available.

Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD): The State agency that serves people with developmental disabilities can help people who want to work find and keep their jobs. This agency can also help you, if you have a developmental disability, to explore the possibilities for you in the work world, develop career goals, and acquire the skills to help you achieve those career goals. Trained staff can support people as they learn about and prepare for the work world. Learn more in the section *Services to Learn About and Prepare for the Work World* at <http://ldh.la.gov/index.cfm/page/132> and at [*What You Need to Know: Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities.*](#)

Louisiana Rehabilitation Services: Vocational Rehabilitation is a State program that helps persons with disabilities obtain the skills and other resources they need to get a job, keep a job, and develop a lifetime career. Many of these services are designed to help you assess your interests and capabilities and to prepare for work. Specifically, counselors can provide guidance in assessing your interest, choosing a career goal, developing work-related skills including good work habits and work related communication, as well as training, work experiences, and try-outs in areas of interest. Learn more at http://www.laworks.net/workforcedev/lrs/lrs_rehabilitation.asp and in [*What You Need to Know: Louisiana Rehabilitation Services.*](#)

Louisiana’s Business and Career Solutions Centers: Career Services Specialists working in these centers can help you navigate through Louisiana’s collection of labor market information resources so that you can learn about those industries with a demand for workers. Career Specialists can provide you with job descriptions, educational requirements, and minimum and maximum pay rates for all occupations in Louisiana. Career Services Specialists can provide you with access to online tools that will assist in matching your skill sets, work values, and work interests with jobs commonly found in Louisiana. Learn more at <http://www.laworks.net/> and http://www.laworks.net/Downloads/WFD/B&CSC_Contacts.pdf and in [*What You Need to Know: Louisiana’s Business and Career Solutions Centers.*](#)

Volunteer work or internships with Natural Supports: The community itself is a terrific way to learn about the work world and the kind of work you might enjoy. Volunteer work or internships (paid or unpaid) for non-profit organizations in your community is a very good way to explore your interests and ability and to gain valuable connections. Many private business owners will be happy to take time to do an information interview with you so you can learn about their work. They may offer you the opportunity shadow staff on the job or do a short internship at their business to explore what work is like there and to learn skills. If you don’t feel comfortable getting in touch with one of these organizations or businesses, you can ask for help from family, friends, a case manager from OCDD, contact your local governing entity (LGE), or one of the Independent Living Centers. You can learn about volunteer opportunities in your community through the internet or by contacting [Volunteer Louisiana](#) or your local Volunteers of America office.

Transition from School to Work

Work Experiences, Career Pathways and Exposure

Your high school or college years are an ideal time to learn about different kinds of careers and businesses and to gain skills and work experience that will help you to find a job after graduation. During your middle school years, you and your family may even want to get started thinking about your interests and abilities and how they match with various careers and types of work.

You can work with your family, teachers, friends, neighbors, and transition and vocational counselors to help gain these interesting experiences. In many cases, you can find paid work experiences that will bring you income while you are contributing to a workplace and gaining useful skills that will build your resume and connections in the business world. If you want to learn more about any of these resources, click on any of the below links, and it will take you to a page that describes available supports and services.

Jump Start Program –You can choose a Jump Start pathway, in your high school years that allows you to focus your high school experience on vocational/career training while earning credits toward a diploma. Within Jump Start, there is also alternate pathway to a diploma for students who require an alternate assessment that provides a vocational, career focused path. To learn more about how you can start your career pathway through your high school Jump Start curriculum, see <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/courses/all-things-jump-start> and [*What You Need to Know: Career Development through Your School.*](#)

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) – Schools, vocational services, and community partners work together to provide work exposure and work experiences for young people between the age of 16 to 21 to prepare them to move from school into employment and post-secondary opportunities to promote employment. Through these pre-employment services, you can explore possible careers, learn about post-secondary educational and vocational training opportunities, gain work experience, prepare for work, and learn to advocate for yourself. A good first step to take advantage of these services is through your school special education services. You can also contact your regional Louisiana Rehabilitation Services office (You can learn more about these services in the section on Pre-Employment Transition Services at http://www.laworks.net/workforcedev/lrs/lrs_rehabilitation.asp and in [*What You Need to Know: Louisiana Rehabilitation Services*](#) and [*What You Need to Know: Career Development through Your School.*](#)

On-Line Resources:

You can also learn more about pre-employment transition services through the fact sheet, *LRS Involvement in Transition*, on the Advocacy Center of Louisiana webpage. www.advocacyla.org.

Louisiana’s Business and Career Solutions Center: Career Specialists are trained to serve Louisiana’s youth (ages 16 to 24) with a variety of services that lead to entry-level jobs with clearly defined career pathways. Center staff have information and resources to connect you with “earn while you learn” programs such as Apprenticeships and Work Experience programs. There is also the possibility that you might be referred to a customized training program when available in your geographic location. In many cases, Center staff can help you gain funding to attend post-secondary--both public and approved proprietary schools-- to train for careers with career pathways. Learn more in <http://www.laworks.net/> and at http://www.laworks.net/Downloads/WFD/B&CSC_Contacts.pdf and [*What You Need to Know: Louisiana’s Business and Career Solutions Centers.*](#)

Volunteer work or internships with Natural Supports: Students in Louisiana, and throughout the United States, are learning more about their interests and developing new skills through volunteer work or internships that they find themselves or with the help of their family, neighbors, friends or community leaders. Volunteer work or internships (paid or unpaid) for non-profit organizations in your community are a very good ways to explore your interests and ability and to gain valuable connections. If you don’t feel ready to contact organizations yourself, ask for help from family, friends, teachers or your transition counselor. They can help you write an e-mail or make a call. You can learn about volunteer opportunities in your community through the internet or by contacting [Volunteer Louisiana](#) or your local Volunteers of America office.

Post-Secondary and Other Comprehensive Vocational Programs: You may be able to gain skills, knowledge and to enjoy a campus-based vocational experience with peers through the growing number of post-secondary educational and vocational programs. These programs are designed to develop work-based skills geared to specific career tracks and/or to provide a post-secondary opportunity to continue to learn and develop your social and communication skills. The Louisiana Department of Education has piloted a number of these options for high school students, and others are springing up through collaborations between schools, service agencies, and/or higher education institutions. We have compiled a partial list of these programs by agency in a separate document. [*What You Need to Know: Post-Secondary and Other Comprehensive Vocational Programs.*](#)

How Will Work Affect Your Benefits Where Can You Get Good Information?

Both the state and federal government have in place work incentives to ensure that you will benefit financially from doing some amount of work and to enable you to keep valuable and important health benefits. We know, however, that you and your family need good information to understand how these work incentives affect your particular situation. Luckily, there are very good benefit counseling resources to give you this information. The Work Incentives Planning and Assistance Program (WIPA) offers benefits counseling for people with disabilities receiving Social Security benefits through the following two non-profit agencies. These two agencies are listed below with a map of their service areas. To learn more about the services offered by these agencies, you can click on the link. You may also want to learn more about work incentives through a number of on-line resources also listed below.

WIPA Agencies

The Advocacy Center of Louisiana - The Advocacy Center (AC) is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization formed in 1977 to protect, empower and advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities and senior citizens in Louisiana. Among the services it offers is a WIPA program to help beneficiaries with disabilities understand how employment may affect their benefits and use that information to make a successful transition to work. To learn more about this program see <http://advocacyla.org/> and [*What You Need to Know: The Advocacy Center of Louisiana*](#).

Advocacy Center South Louisiana Benefits Planning Program (SLBPP)

Acadia	Lafourche	St. John the Baptist
Ascension	Livingston	St. Martin
Assumption	Orleans	St. Mary
Cameron	Plaquemines	St. Tammany
Iberia	St. Bernard	Tangipahoa
Iberville	St. Charles	Terrebonne
Jefferson	St. Helena	Vermilion
Lafayette	St. James	Washington

The Human Development Center (HDC) at Louisiana State University – HDC is a University Center of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, Education, Research and Service with the mission to provide leadership and innovation in interdisciplinary education, community service, research, and to disseminate information to strengthen and increase the capacity of local communities to support and include individuals with developmental] disabilities and their families in all aspects of life in the community. As part of this work, HDC offers a Louisiana Benefits Planning Service (LBPS) to assist individuals to make informed decisions about work and its impact on benefits. To learn more about this program see <https://www.hdc.lsuhsu.edu/> and [*What You Need to Know: The Human Development Center*](#).

The Human Development Center (HDC) at Louisiana State University

Allen	Ascension	Avoyelles
Beauregard	Bienville	Bossier
Caddo	Calcasieu	Caldwell
Catahoula	Claiborne	Concordia
De Soto	East Baton Rouge	East Carrol
East Feliciana	Evangeline	Franklin
Grant	Jackson	Jeff Davis
LaSalle	Lincoln	Morehouse
Natchitoches	Ouachita	Pointe Coupee
Rapids	Red River	Richland
Sabine	St. Landry	Tensas
Vernon	Webster	West Baton Rouge
West Carroll	West Feliciana	Winn

On-Line Resources

WIPA Program Flyer and Service Map: <http://www.hdc.lsuhsu.edu/labps/serviceareas.aspx>.

Social Security Administration description of work incentives at www.ssa.gov/benefits/disability

Knowing Your Rights

Rights in the Workplace and in the Employment Service System

You are likely to have questions about your rights as an applicant for employment or as an employee. You may be wondering how much to disclose to a potential employer about your disability or need information about your right to accommodations by your employer to help you succeed on the job. You may also need support as you advocate to ensure that you have the help you need from the service system to find or support you on your job.

We list here several Louisiana based agencies that can help you learn about your rights and/or advocate for your rights. To learn more about the services they offer, you can click on the links. We also provide some on-line resources to help you understand the rights of individuals with disabilities.

The Advocacy Center of Louisiana - The Advocacy Center (AC) is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization formed in 1977 to protect, empower, and advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities and senior citizens in Louisiana. The *Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (PABSS)* program provides advocacy and legal services around barriers to employment including workplace discrimination and workplace accommodation issues. This program can also help you advocate for services you need such as job training and job placement services. The *Client Assistance Program* advocates and/or provides legal services to ensure applicants and eligible clients receive appropriate services from Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS), Independent Living Centers (ILCs), and vocational services through the Native American/121 programs. The *Work Incentives Planning & Assistance Program (WIPA)* helps beneficiaries of Social Security with disabilities understand how employment may affect their benefits and use that information to make a successful transition to work. To learn more about these programs, see <http://advocacyla.org/> and [*What You Need to Know: The Advocacy Center of Louisiana.*](#)

The Human Development Center (HDC) at Louisiana State University – HDC is a University Center of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, Education, Research and Service with the mission to “Build Capacity, Inspire Chance” by providing leadership and innovation in interdisciplinary education, community service, research, and to disseminate information to strengthen and increase the capacity of local communities to support and include individuals with developmental] disabilities and their families in all aspects of life in the community. As part of this work, HDC offers a Louisiana Benefits Planning Service (LBPS) to assist individuals to make informed decisions about work. To learn more about this program see <https://www.hdc.lsuhsu.edu/> and in [*What You Need to Know: The Human Development Center.*](#)

On-Line Resources

You can find out about your rights as an applicant or employee with disabilities and your rights to advocate for services and supports through the following resources at the Advocacy Center of Louisiana website, at <http://advocacyla.org/services/publications:>

- AC Employment Services for People with Disabilities (services provided by the Advocacy Center)
- Employment Rights of Individuals with Disabilities:
Rights under the ADA, Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and LA Law
- Knowing the Road (A description of LRS Services)
- On Your Own Behalf

You can also learn more about workplace accommodations and rights at the Job Accommodations Network website at <https://askjan.org/>.

Employment First Policy Resources

If you are interested in supporting Louisiana’s Employment First Agenda or learning more efforts to move this agenda forward, there are a number of resources to contact or to read. To learn more about these agencies, you can click on the link.

Agencies that are moving this agenda forward include:

The Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council is made up of people from every region of the state who are appointed by the governor to develop and implement a five-year plan to address the needs of persons with disabilities. Membership includes persons with developmental disabilities, parents, advocates, professionals, and representatives from public and private agencies. The Council’s mission is to lead and promote advocacy, capacity building, and systemic change to improve the quality of life for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. The Council engages in advocacy, capacity building, and systems change activities to enable individuals with developmental disabilities to exercise self-determination, be independent, be productive, and be integrated and included in all facets of community life. Learn more about the LaDDC at <https://laddc.org/> and in [*What You Need to Know: Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council*](#).

The Human Development Center (HDC) at Louisiana State University – HDC is a University Center of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, Education, Research and Service with the mission to “build capacity, inspire chance” by providing leadership and innovation in interdisciplinary education, community service, research, and to disseminate information to strengthen and increase the capacity of local communities to support and include individuals with developmental] disabilities and their families in all aspects of life in the community. In addition to the HDC Benefits Planning Service, HDC supports employment for people with developmental disabilities through training, technical assistance, research, and outreach. Learn more about HDC’s work at <https://www.hdc.lsuhs.edu/> and in [*What You Need to Know: The Human Development Center*](#).

Other Resources:

You may be interested in learning more about Louisiana’s commitment to Employment First by reading two recent publications.

Louisiana Employment First Report. The report summarizes a comprehensive set of recommendations to advance Louisiana’s Employment First goals. The report was developed by an Employment First Workgroup, which is comprised of key stakeholders convened under the leadership of the Governor’s Advisory Council on Disability Affairs. It reviews the national landscape, policy and legislation, describes current State services and initiatives, and analyzes opportunities and challenges. You can read the report at <http://gov.louisiana.gov/assets/Programs/GODA/LouisianaEmploymentFirstReport2018.pdf>. Watch the video of Governor Edwards promoting Employment First policies at this link: <https://youtu.be/OceKZBLC4UM>.

Governor’s Executive Order State As a Model Employer. In an Executive Order issued on March 19, 2018, Governor John Bel Edwards expressed the State’s commitment to serving as a model for employers throughout the State and announced the formation of the State As a Model Employer Task Force. The Task Force developed a report which can be found here: http://gov.louisiana.gov/assets/Programs/GODA/SAME_Report.pdf. This task force will continue developing policies and strategies to improve within state government the rate of hiring, recruitment, and retention of Louisianans with disabilities. Here is a video of Governor Edwards discussing the importance and value of the State As a Model Employer initiative: <https://youtu.be/a6bHxE9qDzA>