



*California's Protection & Advocacy System
Toll-Free (800) 776-5746*

Your Right to Competitive Integrated Employment

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People with disabilities have the same right to work at a job that pays them minimum wage or more, in a place that has people with and without disabilities working together, and provides chances to get raises and promotions, as people without disabilities. This is called Competitive Integrated Employment, or CIE. Only by earning a real wage can a person truly become self-sufficient and independent.¹ The right to CIE is especially important for people with developmental and intellectual disabilities who are often given jobs earning far below minimum wage.

If you want to earn more money, you have the right to seek CIE and earn at least minimum wage. In order to find CIE, people can choose activities and services that will help them reach this goal. CIE is the employment option that you should ask for from your regional center or the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) as CIE allows you to be integrated in the community, work alongside people with a and without disabilities, and earn minimum wage or more.

What is Competitive Integrated Employment?

The word “integrated” means having people with and without disabilities working together. “Competitive employment” means having a job where you are earning at least minimum wage, which is a competitive wage. So,

¹ Minimum wage is currently \$8 per hour in California, rises to \$9/hour on July 1, 2014, and becomes \$10/hour on January 1, 2016.

CIE refers to a workplace where a person with a disability earns at least minimum wage, works with people without disabilities, and has the same pay, benefits, and opportunities for promotion as workers without disabilities.

Can I Get Help Finding and Keeping CIE?

Yes, you can. If you want CIE, you should contact your regional center service coordinator and request an IPP meeting. Vocational or employment services are determined in an Individual Program Plan (IPP) meeting. It is important that the regional center develop an IPP that meets your needs and reflects your choices and preferences. The IPP meeting should be focused on you. This is called “person-centered planning,” an approach that works towards a future where you choose the type of work and setting that you want. More information on working with a regional center is contained below and is also contained in the Disability Rights California publication titled, *Rights under the Lanterman Act: Regional Center Services for People with Developmental Disabilities*, available online at

<http://www.disabilityrightsca.org/pubs/PublicationsRULAEnglish.htm>.

What Happens To My SSI Benefits When I Go To Work?

This is one of the most frequently asked questions by someone who gets Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and wants to work. The Social Security Administration (SSA) provides employment support and work incentive programs that can assist you in your work efforts. These employment supports/work incentives allow you to keep some, or all, of your SSI payments and Medi-Cal coverage while you work.

For more information, you can visit the Social Security website at www.socialsecurity.gov or obtain a copy of the SSA publication, *Redbook on Employment Supports*. You can contact the Area Work Incentive Coordinator for SSA, the Work Incentive Planning and Assistance project in your area, as well as www.disabilitybenefit101.com. You can also contact the PABSS program at 800-776-5746 or visit the Disability Rights California Employment webpage at

<http://www.disabilityrightsca.org/pubs/PublicationsEmployment.htm>.

Conclusion – How to Seek CIE

If you are connected to a regional center and want CIE, contact your regional center service coordinator and request an IPP meeting. The IPP should be focused on you; it should meet your needs and reflect your choices and preferences. At the IPP meeting, make it clear that Competitive, Integrated Employment, CIE, is your goal. The IPP meeting must be held within 30 days of your request.

If you are 16 or older or have already completed your education, you should ask your regional center service coordinator for a Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) referral to get assistance in obtaining CIE. Regional centers are required to refer an adult consumer to a habilitation services provider if the consumer desires and needs habilitation services.

Who Can Help Me to Understand My Rights to CIE?

Disability Rights California (DRC) helps people with disabilities throughout California. DRC has five legal offices in Sacramento, Fresno, Oakland, Los Angeles and San Diego. DRC staff can provide information about legal rights, referrals, training, education and legal representation. You may call DRC at (800) 776-5746 or TTY 1-800-719-5798; or go to

<http://www.disabilityrightsca.org>. The Office of Client's Rights and Advocacy (OCRA) at DRC also assists individuals with developmental disabilities who are clients of a regional center. You may contact OCRA at (800) 390-7032; or go to <http://www.disabilityrightsca.org/pubs/501501.pdf>

Disability Rights California is funded by a variety of sources, for a complete list of funders, go to <http://www.disabilityrightsca.org/Documents/ListofGrantsAndContracts.html>.