



**YOUTH**  
**POWER!**

*Easy Read Edition*

# **Real Work For Real Pay:**

## **A Self-Advocate's Guide to Employment Policy**

**Part 4: Why do we still have  
sheltered workshops?**

## 4. Why do we still have sheltered workshops?

There are three big reasons why we still have sheltered workshops:



1. The people who own sheltered workshops don't want to stop making money

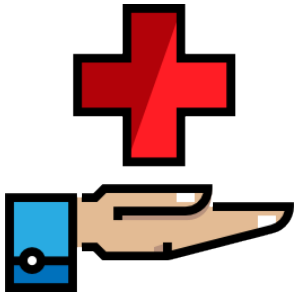


2. Some people think that sheltered workshops are a good thing for disabled people



3. The government is not doing enough to help disabled people get jobs

# Sheltered workshops make money for the owners



Many **sheltered workshops** are also **Medicaid** providers. They get money from Medicaid.



Medicaid pays the sheltered workshops money for every worker with a disability.



Medicaid pays sheltered workshops more money if more disabled people work there.



Sheltered workshops also get money from selling the stuff disabled workers make.



If the disabled workers left, the workshop would lose money.



That is why sheltered workshops do not want to help their workers find **integrated employment**.

## Sheltered workshops do not follow the rules

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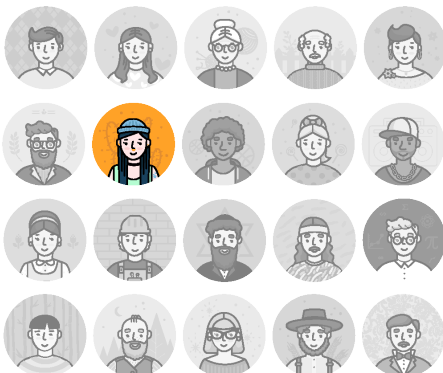
There are rules about getting money from Medicaid. Sheltered workshops that get money from Medicaid have to follow the rules.



Sheltered workshops are supposed to help workers get integrated employment. That is one of the rules for getting money from Medicaid.



But sheltered workshops usually do not help their workers get integrated employment. Sheltered workshops want to keep their workers, because they do not want to lose money.



In 2001, the government looked at workers in sheltered workshops. The government found out that only 5 percent of the workers ever moved to integrated employment.<sup>4</sup>

4 <https://www.gao.gov/new.items/d01886.pdf>

## Some people think sheltered workshops are a good thing



There are some people without disabilities who think that sheltered workshops are good for people with disabilities. Here's what they say.

### Three reasons people think sheltered workshops are a good thing

#### *Reason 1: Families worry about their disabled family member*



Some people with disabilities have families that worry. They worry what would happen if their disabled family member was not working at a sheltered workshop.



They worry that without the job, their disabled family member would have to stay home.

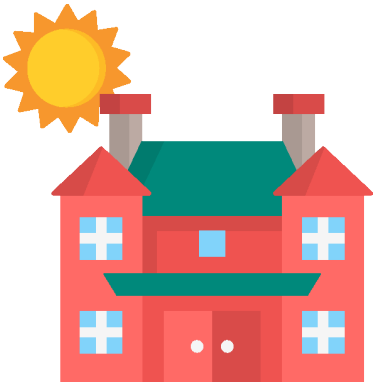


The disabled family member might need their family to take care of them. Then, those family members would have to stop working too.

## *Reason 2: They don't like day habilitation centers*



Sometimes disabled people do not work in sheltered workshops. Sometimes, they do not work at all.

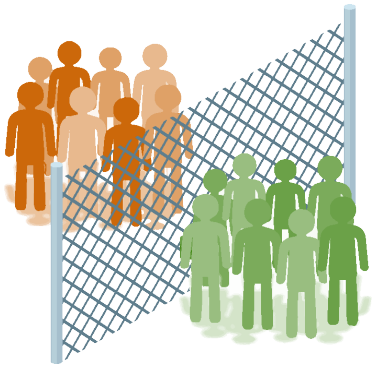


Instead, they might end up in a “**day habilitation center**.” These places are like day-care centers.



Families can drop off a disabled person at one of these places. Family members might do this when they have to work. Or, if they need to take a break.





These centers have some things in common with sheltered workshops. They might separate disabled people from non-disabled people.



The difference is the day centers do not give disabled people jobs.



The centers do not pay the disabled people any money.



Many self-advocates do not like day habilitation centers either. We want **Employment First** instead.

### *Reason 3: Sheltered workshops give disabled people jobs*



It used to be a lot harder for disabled people to get jobs.



Back then, working at a sheltered workshop might be the only way a disabled person could get a job.



This made some people think that sheltered workshops are a good thing.



Now, we know lots of ways to support people to get jobs in the community.



We know that disabled people can work in our communities. We can work in our communities even if we need a lot of support.

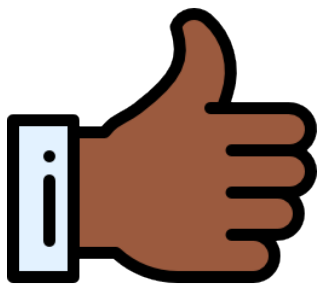


But some people still think sheltered workshops are the only option for people who need a lot of support.

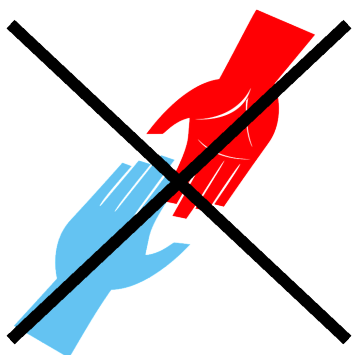
## **It is important to listen to people with disabilities**



We have talked about 3 reasons why some people support sheltered workshops. Those reasons are not good enough.



Lots of non-disabled people want to help people with disabilities. That is a good thing.



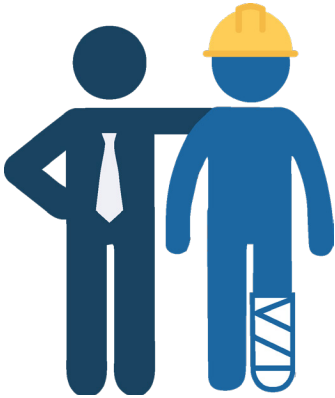
But people need to learn the facts about sheltered workshops. They need to learn that sheltered workshops do not really help disabled people.



They need to listen to what people with disabilities have to say.

# Government programs do not do enough to help

## Vocational rehabilitation programs



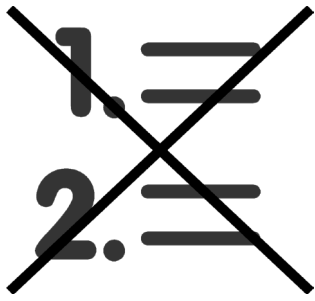
Every state has programs to help disabled people get jobs. These programs are called **vocational rehabilitation**.



The government gives states money to run their vocational rehabilitation programs.

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The people in charge of vocational rehabilitation programs have to follow the rules. If they do not follow the rules, they can't get money from the government.



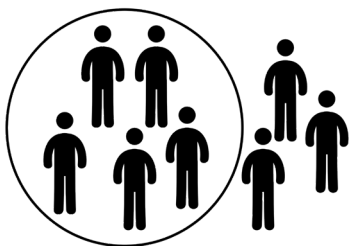
But a lot of vocational rehabilitation programs still do not follow the rules.



Vocational rehabilitation programs are supposed to help all disabled people.



They are supposed to help the people who need the most support, first.



But lots of vocational rehabilitation programs only help some kinds of disabled people.



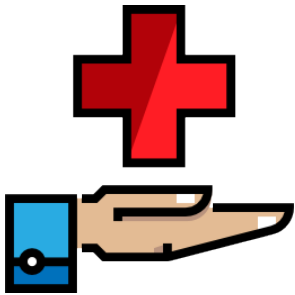
Vocational rehabilitation programs usually do not want to help people with **intellectual disabilities** or **developmental disabilities**.

1.=

2.=

It is against the rules for vocational rehabilitation programs to leave out people because of what kind of disability they have.

## Leaving a sheltered workshop could mean losing your Medicaid



There are different ways to get Medicaid. Many disabled people get Medicaid through another program called SSI.



SSI is the **Supplemental Security Income** program. Disabled people cannot get SSI if they make too much money.



A lot of disabled people in sheltered workshops get their Medicaid through SSI.

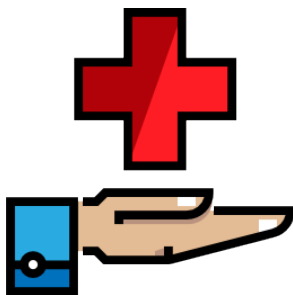




People who get Medicaid through SSI worry about making too much money.



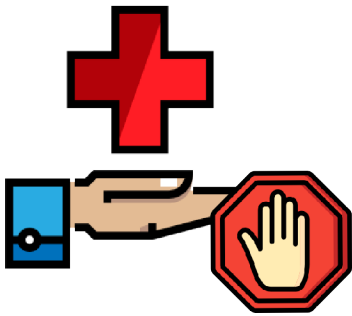
If they make too much money, they will stop getting SSI. Then, they will stop getting Medicaid as well.



Disabled workers need Medicaid, because Medicaid pays for their supports. Without Medicaid, their supports would cost way too much money.



This can put pressure on the disabled workers to stay in sheltered workshops.



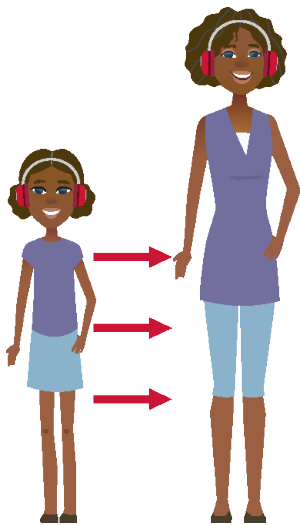
Disabled workers might feel like they have to stay in the sheltered workshop, since it does not pay them much money. If they worked somewhere else, they might make too much money. Then, they would lose their Medicaid.

# Glossary



## day habilitation center

A daytime program for adults with disabilities. “Day programs” and “adult day care” are other names for day habilitation. These places might offer social activities and skill building activities. But, they do not offer employment.



## developmental disability

A lifelong disability that can begin from ages 0-21.



## Employment First

Employment First is the idea that people with disabilities should be able to get real work for real pay.



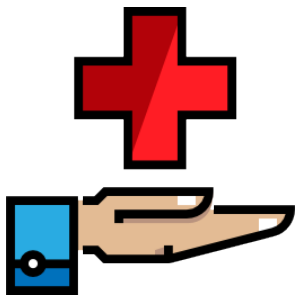
## integrated employment

Integrated employment means that disabled people work in the same place as people without disabilities. Disabled workers do the same kind of work as the non-disabled workers. A job doesn't count as integrated employment unless it is also "competitive" employment.



## intellectual disability

Intellectual disabilities are disabilities that affect everyday life skills. People with intellectual disabilities might learn in a different way. They might say things in a different way. Or, they might need support with things like cooking and house cleaning.



## Medicaid

A health care program in the United States. The U.S. government pays for Medicaid.



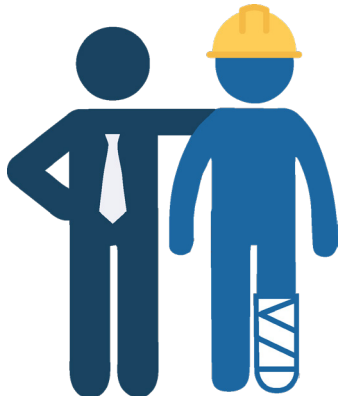
## sheltered workshop

Sheltered workshops are places that give disabled people jobs. But, these jobs do not help workers gain skills. Workers often have to do the same task over and over. For example, putting together a toy in a factory. The disabled people that work in sheltered workshops do not make much money. They are usually paid less than minimum wage for their work.



## Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

A government program that gives financial support for low-income people and people with disabilities.



## vocational rehabilitation (VR)

Services that help disabled people find and keep employment.