

A Proposal for Implementing **A Better Bottom Line:** **Employing People with Disabilities**

Prepared for Governor Lincoln D. Chafee
By the
Governor's Commission on Disabilities



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Executive Summary

The National Governor's Association's *A Better Bottom Line: Employing People with Disabilities: Blueprint for Governors* provides a set of five action steps for Rhode Island to re-design disability services with the goal of increased self-sufficiency and employment and decreased dependence on service delivery systems.

Employment of civilians with disabilities ages 18 to 64 years living in the community for the United States and the State of Rhode Island has remained around 30% for several decades. Resolute action is needed. The NGA's recommends five areas for state action:

1. Make disability employment part of the state workforce development strategy.
2. Find and support businesses in their efforts to employ people with disabilities.
3. Be a model employer by increasing the number of people with disabilities working in state government.
4. Prepare youth with disabilities for careers that use their full potential, providing employers with a pipeline of skilled workers.
5. Make the best use of limited resources to advance employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

The Commission recommends the adoption of a set of state wide goals for all services to individuals with disabilities. The objective of all services should be to encourage and assist each individual with a disability to reach their maximum potential of independence and self-sufficiency.

Individuals with a disability should be provided the necessary employment supports, and be evaluated and served according to their ability.

Table 1 Percentage of 18 - 64 year old individuals who worked in the past 12 months

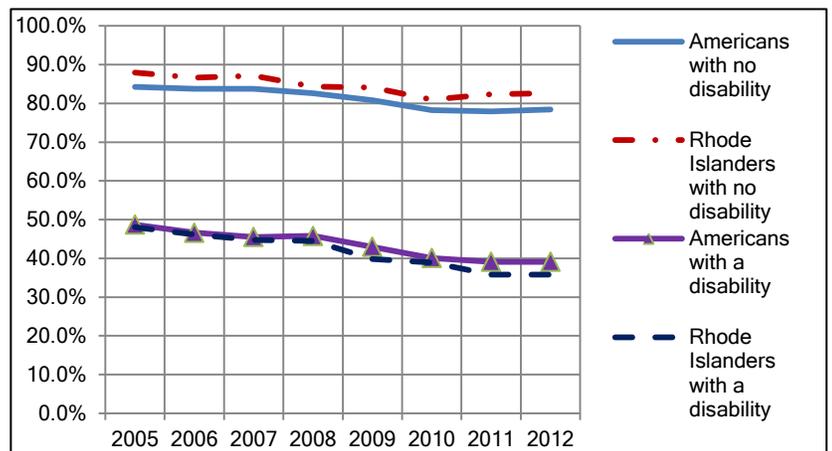
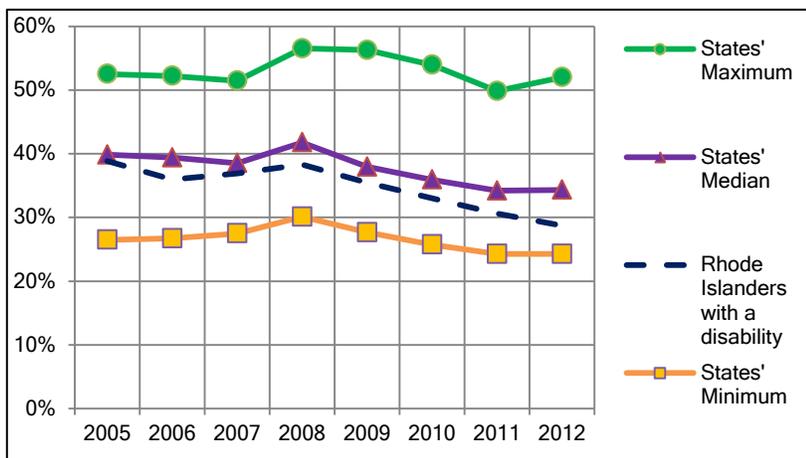


Table 2 State Comparison of percentage of employed working age individuals with disabilities



Rhode Island must make better use all the tools in its tool-kit,

including the Medicaid Buy-In for workers with a disability. Rhode Island ranks 36th of the 40 states with buy-in projects, based on the percentage of Medicaid beneficiaries with a disability.

Table 3 State Medicaid Buy-In Projects 2011, percentage of Medicaid beneficiaries with disabilities enrolled in a buy-in project

Maximum	Median	RI	Minimum
22.0%	2.0%	0.05%	0.0%

The Commission recommends the Governor issue an Executive Order making Employment First a priority and aligning all state disability programs with workforce and economic development programs as proposed by the NGA as his first action.

Recommendations from the National Governor's Association's A Better Bottom Line: Employing People with Disabilities: Blueprint for Governors¹

When deciding how to advance employment opportunities for people with disabilities, governors and other policymakers should consider these five key areas:

1. Make disability employment part of the state workforce development strategy

For many states, the first step has been to prioritize “employment as the first option” when designing policies, programs, and investments to support the employment of people with disabilities. To date, more than 30 states have adopted Employment First strategies, which direct state policies and investments to prioritize employment for people with disabilities. **Governors can make Employment First a priority by issuing an executive order** or working with the state legislature to enact legislation to support it. Governors can also direct state agencies to align disability programs with workforce and economic development programs, track disability employment outcomes and make sure they are included with current workforce data collection, and focus on the business case when meeting with employers.

Establish Employment as a Priority

Examples of ways governors can do so include:

- Launching state workforce strategies that intentionally include people with disabilities.
- Adopting Employment First policies, which reposition state policies and investments toward integrated employment as a first priority for people with disabilities.

The Chairperson of the Commission, or designee could be appointed to the State Workforce Investment Board/Human Resource Investment Council, to ensure inclusion of workers with disabilities in all workforce and economic development programs.

Track Outcomes

All state agencies could be directed to gather and use data to drive disability employment policies, including data on individual wages earned, hours worked, type of employment, hours of support received, job setting, cost of support, and funding source and

The Office of Performance Management could measure the return on investment of disability employment programs and partner with university researchers to gather data on the return on investment of hiring people with disabilities to better understand what types of vocational rehabilitation services produce lasting employment and increased earnings for people with disabilities. The reports could be made available on <http://www.transparency.ri.gov/>

In many states, measuring employment outcomes has not traditionally been a component of disability programs. Thus, gathering and using data related to disability employment is something governors can do to measure progress toward employment goals. Governors can act by using the following strategies:

- Include disability employment with existing workforce metrics.
- Measure outcomes for disability-related programs that set employment as a goal for people with disabilities.
- Measure the return on investment of disability employment programs.

2. Support businesses in their efforts to employ people with disabilities

Businesses are willing to hire people with disabilities, but they need a long-term partner Government must reorient its strategy from looking to businesses to solve a social service problem to instead understand and solve the challenges businesses face in identifying and recruiting skilled workers.

¹ 2012–2013 Chair's Initiative, *A Better Bottom Line: Employing People with Disabilities: A Blue Print for Governors*, The NGA Center for Best Practices, 2013

Governors can provide leadership in building long-term partnerships with these business by directing state agencies to assign one point of contact from the state to work with employers over the long term, provide skills assessment and training, and navigate the complexities of benefits related to workers with disabilities.

Make the Business Case for Employing People with Disabilities

Governors can encourage state agencies to focus on the business case for employing people with disabilities. In doing so, states can focus on two key components:

- Approach businesses about employing people with disabilities with a proposition on the value they will bring, not an appeal to their corporate responsibility.
- Anticipate questions from businesses about their concerns for employing people with disabilities.

Find and Engage Business

- Dedicate staff with business expertise who can make the business case.
- Work with multiple businesses within a sector (for example, financial, health care, or manufacturing).
- Include small businesses.

Support Businesses

- Provide one point of contact to interact with business, and encourage that contact to communicate regularly.

The NetWORKri Centers could be business' single point of contact, for employer incentives and employee supportive services.

- Focus on skills assessment and training of workers with disabilities to meet businesses' needs.
- Provide job coaches when appropriate for individuals who otherwise would not be able to work in

an integrated setting.

- Assist with other accommodations.
- Navigate the complexities of disability benefits.

Support Entrepreneurs with Disabilities

- Include resources and services through vocational rehabilitation for entrepreneurs starting and running their own businesses.
- Certify disability-owned businesses.

The Division of Purchasing should issue revised purchasing regulations, incorporating the requirements of: RIGL 37-2.4 Habilitation Procurement Program; and RIGL 37-2.2 Disability Business Enterprises Program. These were enactment in 2011, but the regulations have never been issued.

3. Increase the number of people with disabilities working in state government

Governors have a wide range of options for increasing the number of people with disabilities they employ, such as creating a fast-track hiring process for people with disabilities, focusing on retention of such employees, and setting hiring goals. One key action is to set a state goal for hiring people with disabilities through an executive order and hold agencies accountable for achieving that goal.

States as Model Employers

State agencies should be required use RIGL 36-4-61 Persons with disabilities - Special list of eligibles to locate the skilled workers with disabilities and use the trial work periods for people with disabilities.

Create a Fast-Track Hiring System

- Waive civil service exam requirements (partially or fully) to increase access to state employment for qualified applicants with disabilities.
- Create special appointment lists to help agencies locate the skilled workers with disabilities they need.
- Offer trial work periods for people with disabilities.

Focus on Retention and Advancement

- Establishing return to work as the first option for workers who acquire disabilities.
- Conducting outreach to educate employees with disabilities about how to request accommodations.

The Commission has set up a working group from the State Employees Workers Comp. Unit, Division of Human Resources, Employees Retirement System of RI, and others to develop a Re-Employment First strategy for retention rather than disability retirement.

Adopt Complementary Approaches to Becoming a Model Employer

The Commission, in consultation with the departments of Administration; Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals; Education; Human Services and Labor and Training and the State Workforce Investment Office, should develop a *RI Better Bottom Line: Employing People with Disabilities Implementation Plan*.

- Designate a task force or advisory body.
- Ensure websites and other materials are welcoming, accessible, and easy to navigate.
- Formalize partnerships among human resources and state agencies that work with people with disabilities.
- Create opportunities for work experiences in state government.
- Train managers on disability etiquette and best practices; and

Set Hiring Goals and Improve Use of Data

- Set hiring goals.
- Improve use of data.

The state should adopt the national 7% utilization goal for employing qualified individuals with disabilities for state government.

4. Prepare youth with disabilities for careers that use their full potential, providing employers with a pipeline of skilled workers

Governors can send a strong message to state agencies, educators, business, and parents on the importance of starting early to create the expectation that employment and a career is a goal for everyone, including youth with disabilities, and ensure that career readiness begins in kindergarten through 12th grade education and is supported at colleges and universities and as students transition to work. Research shows that early career awareness and work experience for youth are indicators of positive employment outcomes, particularly for people with disabilities.

The Board of Education and the statewide school-to-career interagency partnerships should take the lead to incorporate career readiness content into the educational curriculum all for students with disabilities.

Start Early: Incorporate Career Readiness in K-12

- Integrate youth with disabilities in existing state efforts to improve college and career readiness.

- Co-locate vocational rehabilitation counselors and services in high schools².
- Provide other career-readiness and career exploration services, such as career and job fairs, job shadowing, and career-focused mentoring.
- Providing professional skill development and job exploration opportunities in high school;

Provide Work-Based Experience and Skill Development Opportunities

- Offer a hybrid of classroom and work-based education.
- Focus on careers in high-tech and science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields.
- Prioritize work experience programs for students with learning disabilities.
- Offer time-limited supported employment transition experience and reimburse employers for students' training costs.

Support College and University Students in Their Transition to Work

- Encourage collaboration between state vocational rehabilitation agencies and state colleges and universities to target career services to students with disabilities.
- Coordinate between career services and disability services at state college and universities.
- Connect college students with disabilities to internships and job opportunities.

The Commission has been conducting outreach and awareness activities with career services and disability services at public and private colleges and universities.

5. Make the best use of limited resources to advance employment opportunities for people with disabilities

Governors can act to secure additional resources and make the best use of them by directing agency heads to continuously review opportunities for federal support and the possibility of partnerships with federal agencies and the private and nonprofit sectors.

Capitalize on the Numerous Federal Programs

- Consider how disability benefits interact with the changes that result from the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and resources from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).
- Use research and evidence-based practice data collected by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS).
- Connect to technical assistance for states about employment for people with disabilities at the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP).

Connect to Private-Sector and Philanthropic Resources

- Foundations—both community and corporate—are expressing interest in employing people with disabilities and forming public-private partnerships with states and other governments.
- Community or corporate foundation resources can facilitate experimental projects.
- Foundations can act as a neutral convener and foster public-private partnerships across sectors in a community.

² Rhode Island has a partnership with the Educational Collaboratives and the five regional vocational assessment centers (RVACs) where Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) eligible students with disabilities have access to comprehensive vocational assessments and learn about their interests, skills and abilities. The assessments assist ORS to recommend strategies to students on how to best move into employment or postsecondary education. The RVACs are located onsite at the state's regional Educational Collaboratives, which also provide professional development and technical assistance and funding from the Rhode Island Department of Education to school district staff on transition services for youth with disabilities.

Take Advantage of the Disability Experts and Their Efforts in Your State

- The advocacy community.
- The research community and other experts.
- Private-sector stakeholders.

Tables 2005 - 2012 American Community Survey 1-Year: Estimates of Civilian noninstitutionalized population 18 to 64 years.

Table 4 Percentage of 18 - 64 year old individuals who worked in the past 12 months

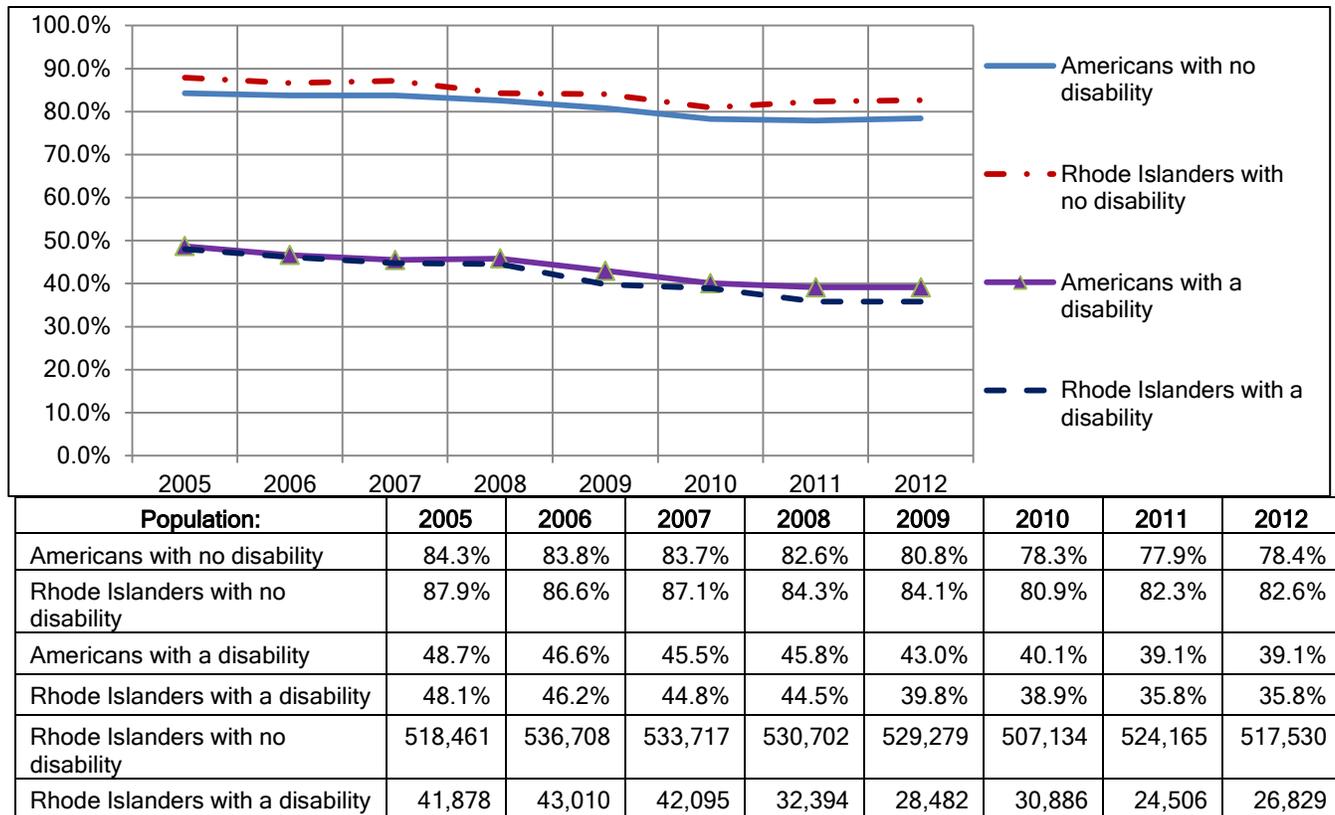
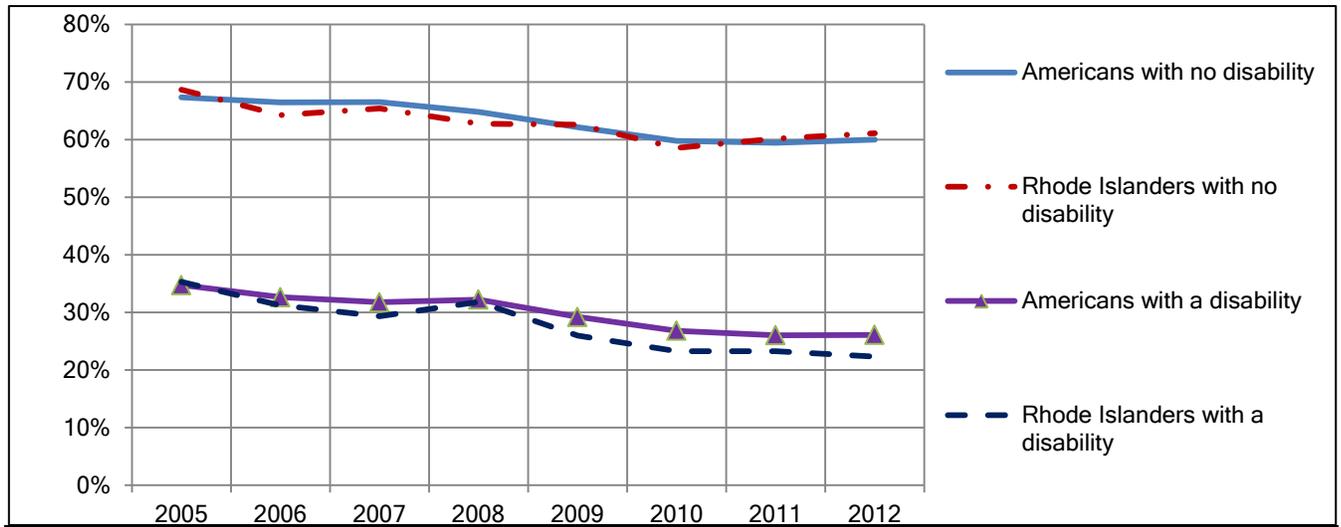
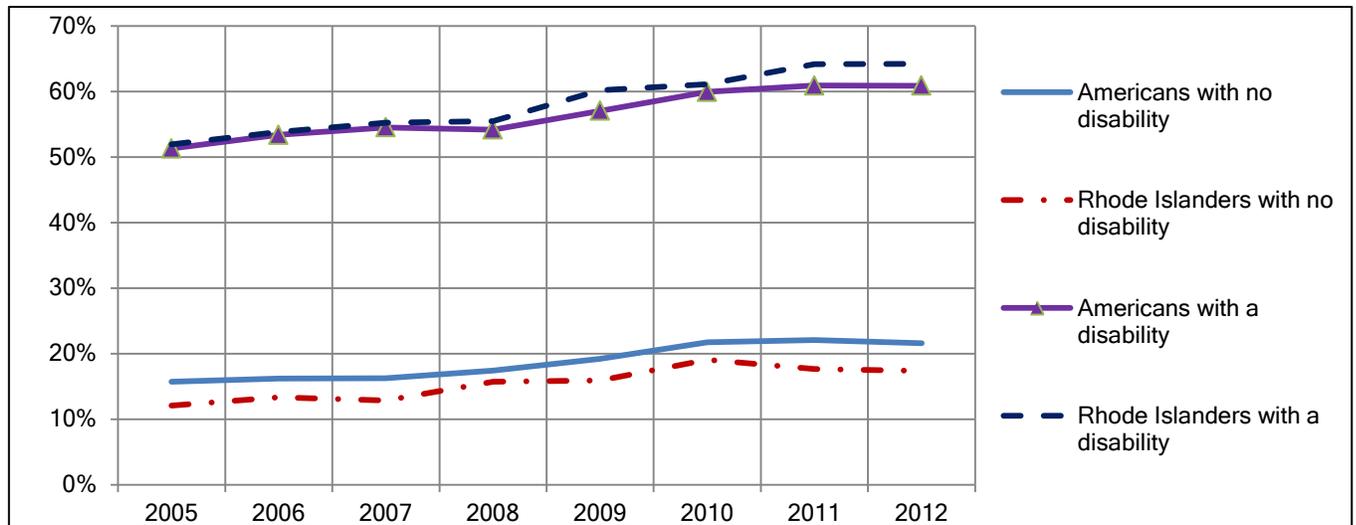


Table 5 Percentage of working age individuals who usually worked 35 or more hours per week



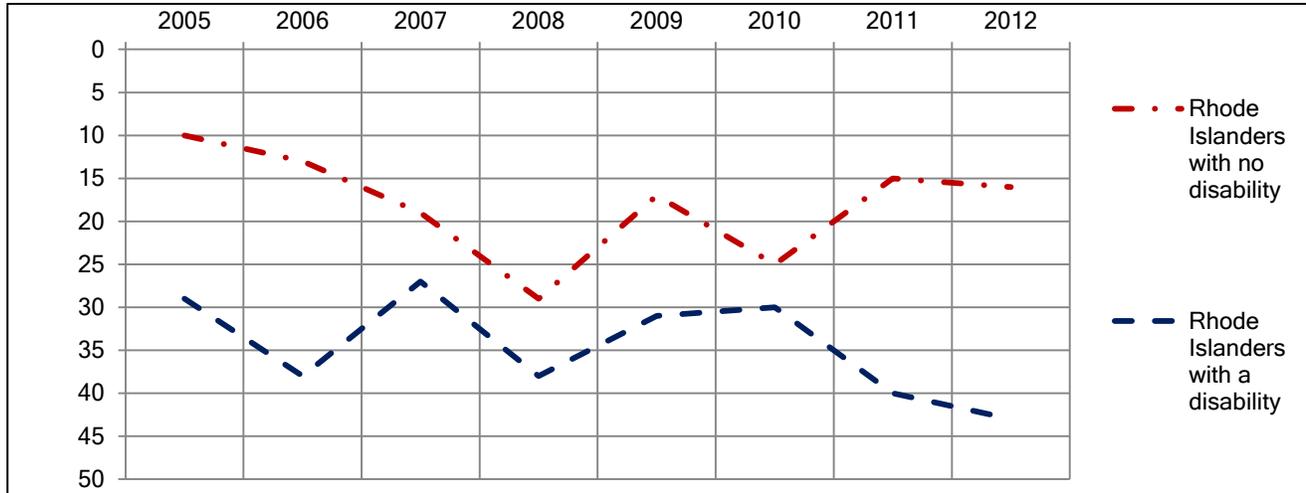
Population	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Americans with no disability	67.3%	66.4%	66.5%	64.8%	62.1%	59.8%	59.4%	60.0%
Rhode Islanders with no disability	68.6%	64.2%	65.4%	62.8%	62.6%	58.5%	60.2%	61.1%
Americans with a disability	34.7%	32.6%	31.7%	32.2%	29.2%	26.8%	26.0%	26.1%
Rhode Islanders with a disability	35.3%	31.2%	29.3%	31.8%	25.9%	23.2%	23.3%	22.3%
Rhode Islanders with no disability	404,787	397,820	400,346	395,080	394,063	366,851	382,960	382,723
Rhode Islanders with a disability	30,738	29,061	27,558	23,134	18,548	18,447	15,916	16,740

Table 6 Percentage of working age individuals who did not work in the past 12 months



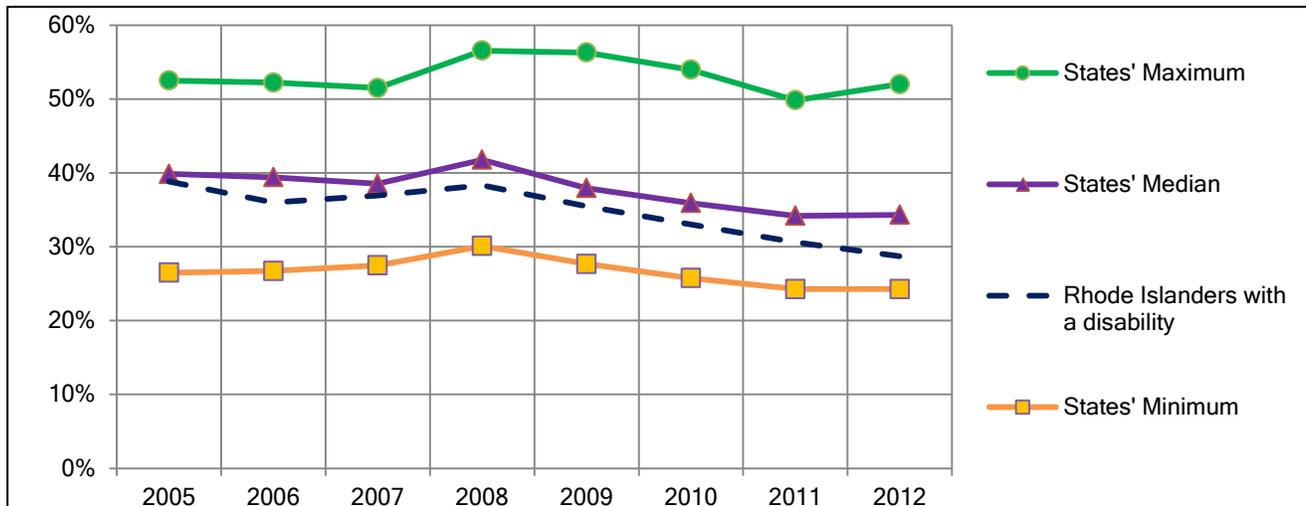
Population	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Americans with no disability	15.7%	16.2%	16.3%	17.4%	19.2%	21.7%	22.1%	21.6%
Rhode Islanders with no disability	12.1%	13.4%	12.9%	15.7%	15.9%	19.1%	17.7%	17.4%
Americans with a disability	51.3%	53.4%	54.5%	54.2%	57.0%	59.9%	60.9%	60.9%
Rhode Islanders with a disability	51.9%	53.8%	55.2%	55.5%	60.2%	61.1%	64.2%	64.2%
Rhode Islanders with no disability	71,233	82,723	78,740	98,792	100,288	119,433	112,471	108,781
Rhode Islanders with a disability	45,263	50,126	51,876	40,365	43,009	48,501	43,887	48,143

Table 7 RI Ranking by percentage of working age individuals employed



Population	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Rhode Islanders with no disability	10	13	19	29	17	25	15	16
Rhode Islanders with a disability	29	38	27	38	31	30	40	43

Table 8 State Comparison of percentage of employed working age individuals with disabilities



Population	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Rhode Islanders with a disability	38.9%	36.0%	36.9%	38.3%	35.5%	33.0%	30.6%	28.7%
States' Maximum	52.5%	52.2%	51.5%	56.6%	56.3%	54.0%	49.8%	52.0%
States' Median	39.9%	39.4%	38.5%	41.8%	37.9%	35.9%	34.2%	34.3%
States' Minimum	26.5%	26.7%	27.5%	30.1%	27.7%	25.7%	24.3%	24.3%

Table 9 Comparison of state Medicaid Buy-In enrollment of employed individuals with disabilities

State Medical Buy-In Projects	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total Disabled Beneficiaries 2010	2010 % Buy-In Enrollees
Iowa	11,210	12,610	13,380	14,452	16,105	16,979	17,788	77,071	22.03%
Wisconsin	9,810	11,150	12,505	14,109	16,084	18,435	20,500	158,336	11.64%
New Hampshire	2,187	2,153	2,207	2,377	2,572	2,575	2,673	24,188	10.65%
Connecticut	5,050	5,618	5,971	6,271	6,518	6,470	6,344	67,873	9.53%
Minnesota	8,108	8,242	8,455	8,830	9,152	9,355	9,721	120,842	7.74%
Massachusetts	13,425	14,863	17,023	18,609	18,956	19,741	20,617	260,239	7.59%
North Dakota	397	475	553	633	665	639	662	10,687	5.98%
Pennsylvania	8,814	11,067	12,906	17,422	23,303	29,220	35,946	562,684	5.19%
Indiana	9,903	8,857	8,347	7,570	7,332	7,268	7,449	152,868	4.75%
New Mexico	1,928	2,074	1,992	1,919	2,058	2,171	1,771	50,925	4.26%
Vermont	898	939	917	955	961	971	985	22,816	4.26%
Idaho	--	--	477	770	860	1,250	1,650	36,470	3.43%
Michigan	411	795	1,101	1,659	4,995	9,267	12,323	329,431	2.81%
Utah	467	646	1,143	1,242	1,140	1,137	1,197	41,012	2.77%
New Jersey	2,231	2,808	3,467	4,025	3,950	5,157	6,295	201,957	2.55%
Wyoming	11	30	87	161	211	243	288	9,573	2.54%
Alaska	352	351	360	376	365	388	444	16,486	2.35%
Kansas	1,229	1,278	1,322	1,379	1,425	1,518	1,582	67,366	2.25%
Maine	1,191	1,228	1,349	1,386	1,370	1,370	1,374	64,220	2.13%
Ohio	--	--	--	2,777	5,728	7,727	9,919	366,057	2.11%
West Virginia	274	551	847	1,155	1,551	2,095	--	103,453	2.03%
Oregon	806	818	890	1,312	1,508	1,638	1,827	87,803	1.87%
South Dakota	--	4	78	150	207	320	389	19,925	1.61%
Louisiana	956	1,300	1,528	1,874	2,318	2,890	3,119	198,139	1.46%
New York	4,553	5,963	6,930	8,165	9,628	10,529	11,481	735,190	1.43%
Arizona	1,040	1,280	1,337	1,470	1,367	1,729	1,946	132,321	1.31%
Montana	--	--	--	--	--	255	651	20,346	1.25%
Washington	950	1,253	1,479	1,657	2,015	2,158	2,066	183,911	1.17%
North Carolina	--	--	--	185	1,363	1,903	2,271	288,280	0.66%
California	2,548	4,140	5,137	5,698	6,377	7,433	8,225	1,169,466	0.64%
Maryland	--	83	207	456	658	775	898	139,327	0.56%
Nebraska	141	143	188	184	160	143	0	36,131	0.40%
Illinois	1,018	965	902	820	822	889	0	331,729	0.27%
Arkansas	70	126	173	179	199	205	178	140,731	0.15%
Texas	--	8	44	89	177	296	342	534,106	0.06%
Rhode Island	--	19	23	31	26	19	20	37,748	0.05%
Nevada	28	28	38	51	21	16	12	38,821	0.04%
Virginia	--	--	14	28	33	36	52	160,760	0.02%
Georgia	--	--	--	1	1	2	--	281,034	0.00%
Missouri	20,811	--	469	--	--	--	--	202,328	0.00%
South Carolina	71	47	51	--	--	--	--	153,884	0.00%
National	110,833	101,863	113,840	130,373	152,127	175,152	192,946	7,636,534	2.29%

Source: Enrollment, Employment, and Earnings in the Medicaid Buy-In Program, 2011 Final Report, Submitted to: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Disabled & Elderly Health Programs Group Mathematica Policy Research May 20, 2013

Office of Health and Human Services Working Adults with Disabilities Program Sherlock Plan Progress Report

November 8, 2013

Reporting requirements pertaining to 40-8.7-9 Regulations and Commencement of Program

Item 1.

- Total # of applications (since initial collection of data 2008) – 64
Active – 20
Closed – 44
- Total # of approved applications – 20
(Pending applications - 3)
- The number of applicants currently eligible for other forms of medical coverage – 17

Item 2. Demographics including: age, sex, employment supports provided; and primary disabling condition, as permissible under the health insurance portability act of 1996 (HIPPA) privacy and security rules:

- Data base to be developed upon expansion of the program. At this time, given the small numbers of participants, we are unable to provide this level of information.

Item 3. Prior and current participation in other public assistance programs including Medicare, Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), including the 1619(b) provision:

- Prior/current participation on other public assistance programs (Medicare, SSDI, SSI, 1619b) –
Medicare – 17
SSDI – 18
SSI – 13
SSI/1619B – 7
- Prior/current participation in other public assistance programs (AFDC/FIP, SNAP, GPA, QSD, SPPR) –
16

Item 4. The number of beneficiaries employed and the average wages of those beneficiaries prior to and post Medicaid buy-in plan eligibility:

- Current employment – 19
- Average wages - \$766.40/month

No change between pre and post eligibility at this time, but we continue to monitor.

Item 5. The amounts of premiums collected:

- Premiums collected - \$559.00/month
- Number of participants with premiums – 9

Item 6. Medicaid claims data including pre-buy in, while on the buy-in and if disenrolled, after buy-in to perform an analysis of costs/per member, per month, of buy-in enrollees shall also be provided by the Medicaid agency to the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant recipient, as provided for in the data use agreement

- To be developed upon expansion of the program.

Item 7. Finding and recommendations with regard to “best practices” used by other state in the New England region and nationwide that should be considered to increase employment among Medicaid beneficiaries with disabilities and how to best support Medicaid beneficiaries with disabilities who are working

- Executive Office of Health and Human Services has established a committee to review all issues for implementing the Sherlock Plan. Best practices and employment outcomes will be part of this committee’s future agenda as we work through initial implementation of the Sherlock Plan.

Item 8. Identification and strategies that the finance committees should consider regarding challenges or opportunities for workers with disabilities in Rhode as the Affordable Care Act is implemented; including but not limited to, ensuring that employment policies and supports are integrated into the state’s design and implementation of the following long-term care Affordable Care Act provisions; Section 10202-Balancing Incentive Payments Plan (BIPP); 1915 (i) State Plan Amendment; Section 2401- Community First Choice (CFC); Section 2703-Health Homes for Individuals with chronic conditions; Money Follows the Person; 2014 Medicaid Expansion; and the dual eligible integrated care plan models.

- In progress