Summary of the Issue: On July 1, 2000 the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) took affect, replacing the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). The overall purpose of WIA is to create and integrate workforce preparation and employment system that meets the need of job seekers and those seeking to advance their careers, as well as the employment needs of the nation’s employers. Persons with disabilities are among the people who are supposed to benefit from such a restructuring. This new federal policy could lead to changes in the manner in which students with disabilities are supported in post secondary education and other life long opportunities leading to subsequent employment.

Study Questions/Method: This study examined both the WIA policy and a pilot implementation of the nine states that received grants to test implementation of WIA regulations. All information, including resources from Cornell University, available to computer based and on-line searches of electronic databases regarding the issue was analyzed.

Findings: The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) appears to be a powerful piece of legislation. It has the potential to make a positive impact upon persons with disabilities who are seeking career advancement and training within postsecondary
education programs. Both the review and analysis suggest that federal policy and state implementation plans, for the most part, address the training and employment needs of persons with disabilities, as well as the role of postsecondary education programs in addressing those needs. It is also evident that, given the wording of federal policy and initial state plan guidance, there may be significant opportunities for persons (including youth) with disabilities to be supported in the attainment of postsecondary education, and subsequent employment goals. The perceived benefits of WIA are:

1. Immediate access to a variety of agencies;
2. One-Stop partners are learning about the services of other partners and working to provide a full range of services;
3. Building a broader community is being built around employment and training programs;
4. Accessibility to all One-Stop partners services has improved;
5. Services truly are better coordinated; and
6. The shift of the government from process to product and customer satisfaction.

Also, given past negative experience regarding the inclusion of persons with disabilities within the federal educational and employment legislation and state level guidance, there is reason for concern that their needs may not receive the necessary attention. There are possible organizational barriers in: fear, sharing, gatekeepers, money and risk and responsibility.

Implications by Audience:
- Students with disabilities need to educate themselves about their rights under WIA, in order to make informed decisions.
- Postsecondary institutions and state vocational rehabilitation agencies need to use this information in career education, especially for students with disabilities.
- Workforce investment boards need to work for nondiscrimination of people with disabilities and use the exposure of such as guides in designing their own programs.

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