



WORKABILITY

WorkAbility is a state-funded program that provides worksite training and follow-up for students with special needs who are making the transition from school to work.

Scope

In 1981, the California Department of Education completed a two-year study concerning the status of vocational programs for students with disabilities.

The study showed that:

- Special education students were not being adequately prepared for the labor market;
- Few students with disabilities were successful in vocational education unless extra assistance was made available to them;
- Special needs students often failed to succeed in required academic courses because of their lack of academic readiness;
- Vocational courses did not always specifically target the reading or math levels that some special education students required;
- A state interagency approach was needed to bring together the teaching skills of California Department of Education educators, the job-seeking support of Employment Development specialists and the counseling skills of Department of Rehabilitation counselors.

California Department of Education implemented WorkAbility I in 1981 to increase the employability of special education students and provide career and/or vocational education training as well as specialized education work experiences. WorkAbility II was implemented in 1985 to provide specialized vocational assistance to out-of-school youth and adults with disabilities. In 1986, WorkAbility III was implemented to serve people with disabilities who are both community college students and Department of Rehabilitation clients who desire and need employment. WorkAbility III offers direct job placement, transition assistance into jobs and supportive services. WorkAbility IV, which was implemented in 1992, assists persons with disabilities who are both university students and DR clients in transition from school to work.

Students are provided with job training at no cost to the employer and the wages are paid through WorkAbility. Students receive up to 100 hours of training to learn job-related skills in real work environments. Students also have a chance to relate schoolwork to their experiences in the workplace while developing self-esteem, independence and employability and communication skills. A WorkAbility job placement specialist assists in placement, training and monitoring student progress.

Regulatory Authority

WorkAbility is funded and administered by the California Department of Education, Special Education Division and is supported by *CA Education Code Section 56470–4*.

Source: *Work-Based Learning Guide*, California Department of Education, 1998 and CA Education Code.

For more information visit:

California Department of Education

Special Education Division

http://www.cde.ca.gov/spbranch/sed/worka_i/wkaindex.htm

California Law, Education and Labor Code

<http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/calaw.html>

This factsheet is part of the Work-Based Learning Toolkit and is intended to provide an overview of relevant quality, safety and legal issues relating to work-based learning placements at the time of publication.

It is not intended to provide comprehensive information nor to serve as a substitute for appropriate legal advice.

To access the complete toolkit, visit www.stc-clearinghouse.com or www.nww.org