



Highlights of [GAO-05-54](#), a report to congressional requesters

## Why GAO Did This Study

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 includes provisions intended to ensure that people with disabilities have equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from the programs and activities offered through one-stop career centers (one-stops). But little is known, and questions have been raised, about how well this system is working for persons with disabilities. This report examines (1) what the Department of Labor (Labor), states, and the one-stops have done to facilitate comprehensive access to the WIA one-stop system; (2) the various relationships that the one-stops have established with disability-related agencies to provide services to persons with disabilities; (3) what Labor has done to ensure that the one-stops are meeting the comprehensive access requirements, and the factors that have affected efforts to ensure compliance; and (4) what is known about the employment outcomes of persons with disabilities who use the one-stop system.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that Labor develop and implement a long-term plan for ensuring that the one-stops comply with the comprehensive access requirements. In developing such a plan, Labor should use the expertise of staff from CRC, ETA, and ODEP. Labor generally agreed with our recommendation and said that even more could be done to ensure comprehensive access within the one-stop system.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-54](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-54).

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Sigurd Nilsen at (202) 512-7215 or [nilsens@gao.gov](mailto:nilsens@gao.gov).

# WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT

## Labor Has Taken Several Actions to Facilitate Access to One-Stops for Persons with Disabilities, but These Efforts May Not Be Sufficient

### What GAO Found

Labor has awarded grants to facilitate comprehensive access, which is defined in this report as providing people with disabilities the equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from the programs, activities, and/or employment offered by the WIA one-stop system. States and local areas have used these grants for a range of efforts, including increasing staff capacity to provide services to persons with disabilities. During our site visits to 18 local areas and one-stops, we found that officials at most sites were working to implement architectural access requirements. Moreover, local areas and one-stops varied in the degree to which they had addressed other areas of comprehensive access. For example, a few sites had only begun to acquire assistive technology devices; other sites had assistive technology and had trained some or all of their staff in how to use it.

One-stops have established various relationships to provide services to persons with disabilities. The structure of the one-stops' relationships with state vocational rehabilitation (VR) programs varied, as did the extent to which they have formed relationships with disability-related service providers other than VR. A few local areas and one-stops primarily formed relationships with VR, while others had also formed relationships with community-based disability organizations.

Although Labor has taken several actions to ensure comprehensive access to one-stops, these efforts may not be sufficient. Labor's Employment and Training Administration (ETA), Civil Rights Center (CRC), and Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) have issued guidance and assistance on the regulatory requirements. CRC also has conducted on-site reviews at local areas and one-stops in two large metropolitan areas in two states. In both areas, CRC identified instances of noncompliance with these requirements. Reviews in two other states will be completed during fiscal year 2005, but Labor has not developed a long-range plan for how it will carry out its oversight and enforcement responsibilities beyond 2005. To date, CRC's monitoring and enforcement efforts account for less than 2 percent of the total number of local areas and one-stops nationwide. The CRC Director stated that she had not yet determined whether CRC would conduct additional on-site reviews.

The information that Labor publishes on employment outcomes for people with disabilities is limited for a variety of reasons. Disclosure about disability status is voluntary, thus the information about employment outcomes may be misleading. The collection of information on the employment outcomes of WIA participants is limited to those who are registered for services, and one-stops are not required to register customers who participate in self-service or informational activities. The performance measurement system may result in customers being denied services because local areas may be reluctant to provide WIA-funded services to job seekers who may be less likely to find employment.