

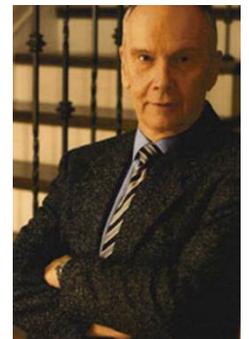
Sheltered Workshops No Better Than Institutions, Report Finds

A scathing advocacy group report released in January 2012 is taking issue with sheltered workshops and the advocates, employers, lawmakers and others who encourage subminimum wage jobs for individuals with disabilities.

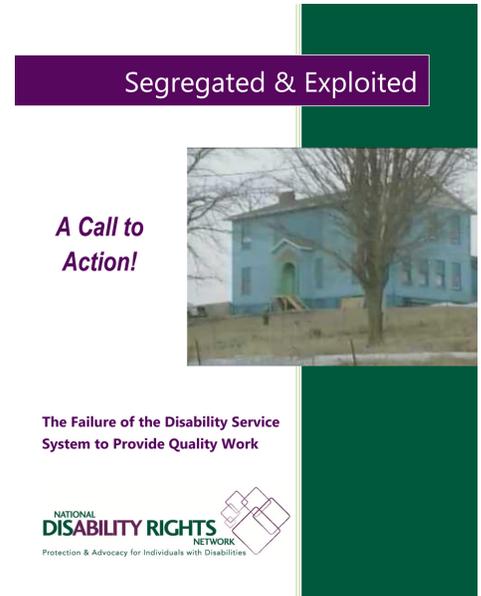
The [report](#) from the National Disability Rights Network paints a glum picture of the jobs held by many Americans with disabilities that pay less than the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour. In it, the authors charge that the segregated environments people with disabilities often work in are akin to institutions by “warehousing” people, limiting their opportunities and putting them in danger of abuse and neglect, all while providing financial gain for employers, some of whom earn six-figure salaries.

<http://www.ndrn.org/images/Documents/Resources/Publications/Reports/Segregated-and-Exploited.pdf>

“For decades we have worked to ensure federal laws guarantee the right of people with disabilities to live and work in their chosen communities,” said Curt Decker, executive director of the National Disability Rights Network, an umbrella group for the protection and advocacy organizations in each state, which produced the report. *“Yet, our investigation found that many people with disabilities are still being segregated and financially exploited.”*



Under current law, the Department of Labor authorizes select employers to pay less than the minimum wage to workers with disabilities if the employee is determined to be less productive as a result of their disability. In such cases, individuals are paid a percentage of the hourly wage a typical employee would earn for performing the job.



However, government oversight of employers to ensure that workers are paid appropriately is limited, the report found, leaving the door open for abuse given that many workers are not able to speak up for themselves.

What's more, while sheltered workshops are typically billed as providing job training, the report authors argue there's little opportunity for people to transfer into competitive employment since the skills they're taught frequently have little application elsewhere. And the low pay workers receive — often just 50 percent of the minimum wage — keeps people in a cycle of poverty.



Beyond Segregated and Exploited

, is a follow-up to a report released last year that examined the issue of segregating working people with disabilities in sheltered workshops and the use of the subminimum wage to exploit their disability for the financial gain of employers.

The new report is an update on progress to end those practices and move toward a system that encourages integrated employment options that pay competitive wages.



This report recommends:

- ✓ Ending segregated employment and the subminimum wage by restricting federal and state money available to employers who segregate employees with disabilities.
- ✓ Strengthening current and creating new tax incentives for employers to hire people with disabilities in integrated workplaces at comparable wages.
- ✓ Increasing labor protections and enforcement of existing laws.

The report, found at www.ndrn.org, is called **Beyond Segregated and Exploited: Update on the Employment of People with Disabilities.**