



# LEADING TO EMPLOYMENT

## Information Brief

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### FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT STRATEGIES

Employment is often considered the first step towards a better financial future. However, financial empowerment skills can be an important component of seeking and obtaining employment for job seekers with and without disabilities. LEAD Center has created several resources to support the integration of financial empowerment strategies within employment services. Read on to learn about (1) key financial empowerment strategies that can help to facilitate employment outcomes, and (2) LEAD Center resources to aid you in understanding and providing these services within your workforce program.

### FINANCIAL LITERACY EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

Financial literacy education activities became part of the law with the passage of the [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act \(WIOA\)](#) in July 2014. Youth participants and adult job seekers with and without disabilities under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act may be able to receive financial literacy education. The nine defined program elements in the WIOA Final Rule that describe financial literacy education activities (Section 20CFR681.500) are explained in [Financial Literacy Education Frequently Asked Questions Under WIOA](#). As you review the nine defined program elements, you may note that they go beyond financial education to include financial coaching, debt management, and credit building activities. You can use this and other LEAD Center resources to better understand which services are required to be offered to youth participants and when to provide these services to adults.

### FINANCIAL EDUCATION

Financial education is a service that supports an individual in understanding what they need to earn to meet their current living expenses, as well as what they need to earn to meet the costs of the life that they want. There are many [free financial education tools](#) available to build the financial knowledge of customers with and without disabilities. Additionally, National Disability Institute (NDI) created [supplemental tools](#) to support workforce professionals in providing financial education by integrating this content into their current workforce services.



## FINANCIAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT

A financial health assessment is not required by law, but is a useful tool to identify financial crises and financial literacy skills development needs. Understanding the current financial picture of a job seeker also provides an opportunity to address issues that may create barriers to employment. LEAD Center offers an [archived webinar series](#), in collaboration with the Virginia Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), to support increased knowledge about Financial Health Assessments (FHAs) and how FHAs can support employment goals. For workforce professionals who are concerned about the questions that may arise during a discussion of a customer's financial health, NDI has created [quick reference guides](#) on multiple financial stability topics that address financial concerns, which can have significant impact on the individual's ability to achieve their employment goals.

## BENEFITS PLANNING SERVICES

For job seekers with disabilities who receive Social Security disability benefits, connecting with a benefits planner can help the individual to better understand the impact of earnings on their Social Security and other disability benefits. Nationally, the [Work Incentive Planning and Assistance \(WIPA\) projects](#) are funded by the Social Security Administration (SSA) to provide benefits planning to enable beneficiaries with disabilities to make informed choices about work. For individuals who receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI), understanding the impact of work on this unearned income and accompanying Medicaid or Medicare benefits can be the difference between going to work and not going to work.

Financial empowerment is about more than having a higher income or knowing more about personal finances; it is the ability to use financial knowledge to make informed decisions. For more information about how to improve the financial empowerment of your job seekers, with and without disabilities, please visit the [Financial Literacy and Capability](#) section of the [LEAD Center website](#) or contact [info@leadcenter.org](mailto:info@leadcenter.org).