



The Vermont Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS) Supported Employment Program

Supported employment services for individuals with developmental disabilities are based on the value that personalized job site supports enable individuals to be employed in local jobs with their fellow Vermonters. The belief that most people can work when provided the right supports sets Vermont apart from other states where “employment” services are facility-based and often equate to sub-minimum wages in segregated workshops isolated from the community. By 2002, Vermont had closed all sheltered workshops in the state, eliminating segregated jobs. Today, almost half of all individuals receiving developmental disabilities services in Vermont are employed in the regular workforce; all of whom are paid at Vermont minimum wage or higher.

In Vermont, supported employment is funded through a thirty year plus collaboration between the Developmental Disabilities Services Division (DDSD) and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). The respective agencies contribute as follows:

- DVR supports the initial job development and placement services and can provide ancillary supports like funding for training or work clothing.
- DDSD provides the onsite job coaching and long term supports needed to help individuals remain employed and advance in their jobs.

This collaboration has been an enduring success as illustrated by the following outcome data highlights:

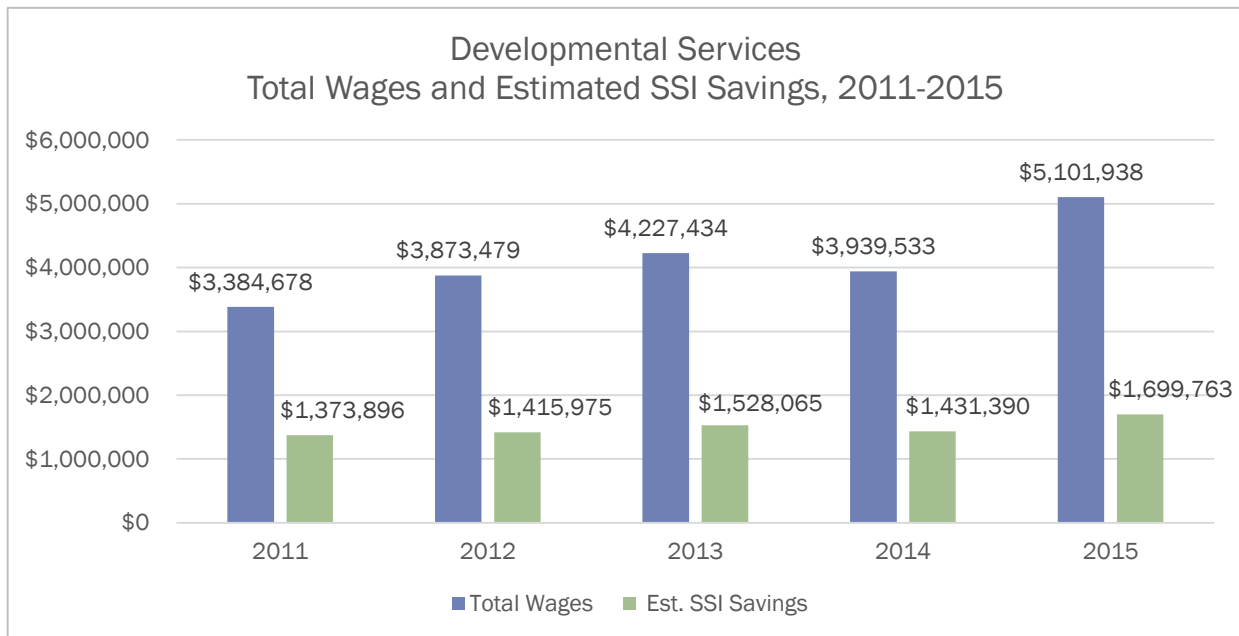
- **DDS Consumers are Working in Record Numbers:** In 2015 almost half (48%) of adults of working age served in the DDS program were employed (see Chart 2).
- **Employment Outcomes are Improving:** Since 2011 the DDS program has steadily increased both the total aggregate number of people employed and the percentage of people served who are employed (see Chart 2).
- **Supported Employment has a Real Economic Impact:** In 2015 DDS consumers earned in total \$5.1 million in real competitive jobs (see Chart 1).
- **Supported Employment Reduces Dependence on Benefits:** In 2015 the Social Security disability benefits paid to DDS consumers were reduced by an estimated \$1.7 million (see Chart 1).
- **The Vermont DDS Supported Employment Program is a National and International Model:** In 2017, the *World Future Council*, which recognizes policies in which progress is particularly urgent, selected Vermont’s DDS Supported Employment from over 20 worldwide nominees to receive the **Zero Project Innovative Policy 2017 Award** at their February conference for Vermont’s excellence in employment of people with disabilities.

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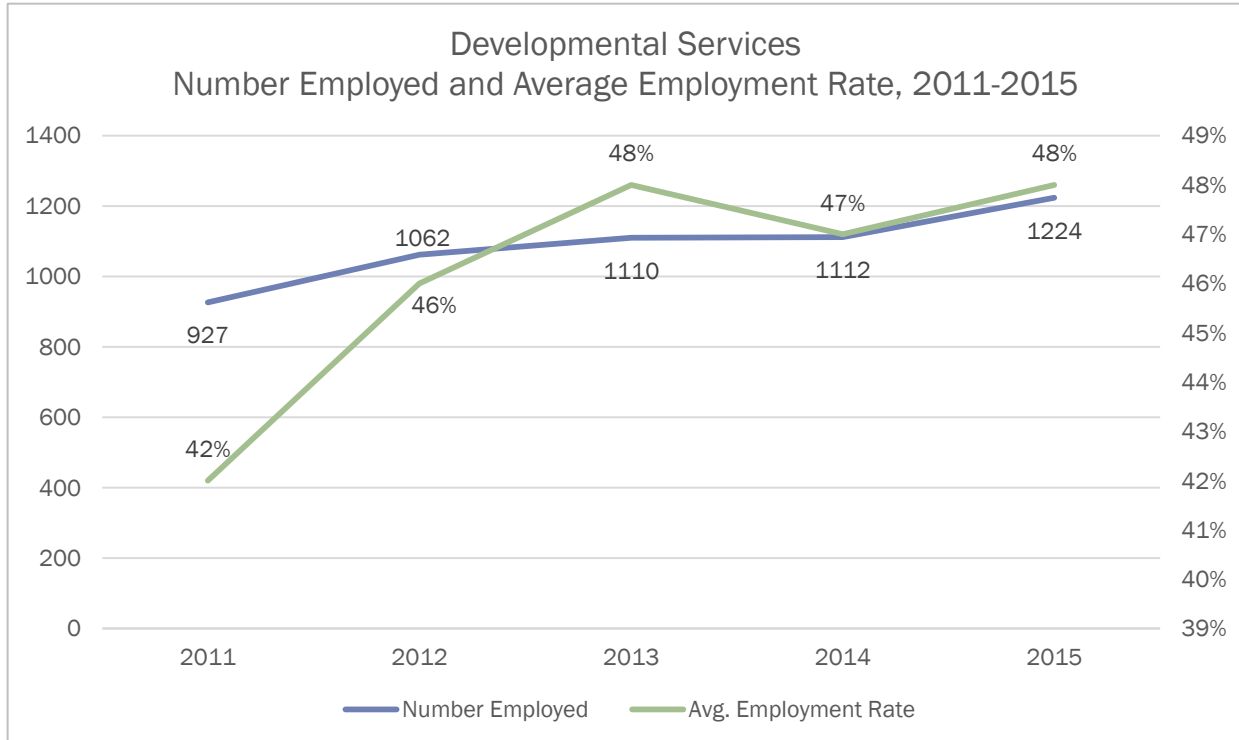
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Chart 1: Total Wages and Estimated SSI Savings, 2011-2015



Supported Employment has a Real Economic Impact and Reduces Dependence on Benefits

Chart 2: Number Employed and Average Employment Rate, 2011-2015



DDS Consumers are Working in Record Numbers and the Employment Outcomes are Improving