



# Disability Facts

Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County

- **Approximately 70% of individuals with disabilities are unemployed.**
- Individuals with disabilities are the largest group at-risk for school dropout and job loss. (RSA, 1998)
- Many youth and adults with disabilities can't describe their disability or the functional limitation.
- Disability specific legislation (e.g. access and reasonable accommodation) applies to federally funded programs, worksites, K-12 school settings, etc.
- Youth exiting special education go on to work and post secondary education activities far less than their non-disabled peers.
- Self-awareness, perseverance and proactivity are key elements to life success in people with a disability.
- Service providers are often unaware of legal requirements, and customers with disabilities are often unaware of their rights under the law.
- Service providers are often need technical assistance to understand and meet the needs of customers with disabilities.

## Learning Disabilities

- LD is the fastest growing impediment to employment today (Rehabilitation Services Administration, 1998) Estimated 15% of current workforce is learning disabled and doesn't know it. (US Dept. of Labor, 1997)
- Of individuals in adult basic education programs, 50-80% have learning disabilities. (US Employment and Training Administration, 1998)
- As many as 50% of AFDC clients may have learning disabilities. (DSHS Report: Functional Impairments of AFDC Clients 1992)
- 36% of the individuals served through Department of Vocational Rehabilitation for Specific Learning Disability (SLD) have a corresponding psychiatric diagnosis. (Rehabilitation Services Administration, 1998)



# What is a Learning Disability?

*From the video presentation "Learning Disabilities: Learning from the Source"*

A learning disability, also known as LD, is a central nervous system disorder that manifests itself in one or more of the areas related to input, processing, and output of information. Learning disabilities that affect the input of information are often related to listening or reading. As someone listens or reads, the information being taken in, is often translated and is recognized or stored into memory incorrectly. For example

**Saw** is processed as **saw**, but written as **was**  
16 plus **14** becomes 61 times 14  
**conversation** switches to **conservation**

Learning disabilities that affect the processing of information are often related to sequencing and storing information into memory. In these instances, a person may have difficulty organizing information, retrieving it, or putting it into a correct order.

A person may forget appointments, phone numbers, and birthdays  
"Which day was the appointment? Was it am or pm?"  
Groups of digits in phone numbers may change order  
Mathematical operations can be difficult to perform. Columns of numbers may be added in a different order.

Learning disabilities can also manifest themselves at the point of output. Even if a person inputs and processes information correctly, a person with LD may have difficulty with verbal or written expression.

At the point of output, individuals may misplace words, switch letters or numbers, or mispronounce sounds  
Writing is often illegible, words and letters can be reversed, and grammar and punctuation are often incorrect.

Without accommodations and strategies, individuals with learning disabilities frequently have difficulty demonstrating their knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Their learning disability often gets in the way of consistently inputting, processing, and producing information. As a consequence, many individuals with learning disabilities experience frustration, anxiety, doubt, and low-self esteem.

Each individual with LD has unique strengths, intelligences and the ability to learn. Using strengths is a key to successful learning, and can minimize processing problems.

A person with auditory strengths will learn easily by hearing and discussing information. When individuals with kinesthetic strengths get to learn by doing, information is clear. Regular routines and checklists assist memory. Flow charts and diagrams help those with visual strengths.

Simply put, when an individual with learning disabilities has a strong understanding of his or her learning strengths, shares what helps and uses strengths, success is limitless. There are many different ways to be successful because there are so many different ways to be intelligent.