



Kim Reynolds  
Governor  
January 2, 2018

Adam Gregg  
Lt. Governor

Emily Wharton  
Director

To Whom It May Concern:

On December 2, 2017, the Iowa Commission for the Blind unanimously passed a change to the Iowa Department for the Blind Manual which prohibits the purchase of goods or services from any entity in possession of a 14c certificate. While we will honor all existing contracts and pay for services authorized prior to this date, no new contracts or authorizations will be written with any organization holding a 14c certificate. Organizations holding a certificate that they are no longer using and have no intention of renewing can request an exception to policy.

14c certificates enable an employer to pay an employee with a disability less than the federal minimum wage. Section 14c of the Fair Labor Standards Act pre-supposes that a person with a disability is inherently less productive and therefore less deserving of compensation for his/her time and talents than a typical non-disabled employee. As stated in the Department of Labor Fact Sheet: "A worker who has disabilities for the job being performed is one whose earning or productive capacity is impaired by a physical or mental disability, including those relating to age or injury. Disabilities which may affect productive capacity include blindness, mental illness, developmental disabilities, cerebral palsy, alcoholism and drug addiction. The following, taken by themselves, are not considered to be disabilities for purposes of paying sub minimum wages : education disabilities, chronic unemployment, receipt of welfare benefits, nonattendance at school, juvenile delinquency, and correctional parole or probation."(1). In order to apply for, receive, and utilize a 14c certificate, an organization must share this belief about the capacities of people with disabilities. This belief cannot help but influence all aspects of service provision. It sets the expectations and those expectations frame the career options presented to the client. Those expectations decrease the amount of effort expected from the client and put forth by the staff. It encourages individuals to see themselves as unworthy of a living wage, incapable of moving off of public assistance, and less of a person than the non-disabled people around them.

The mission of the federal vocational rehabilitation program is to provide services that enable people with disabilities to "prepare for and engage in competitive integrated employment and achieve economic self-sufficiency." This pre-supposes that blind people and other people with disabilities can and should be as productive as their non-disabled peers and deserve the same level of compensation for their time and talents. This belief is shared by the Iowa Department for the Blind.

Because services that lead to competitive, integrated employment cannot effectively be provided by someone who does not start with the assumption that such an outcome is not only possible, but normal and expected, contracting for training or support services from such a service provider is not an effective use of federal VR funds or our state appropriation. While clients have the right to informed choice regarding service providers, the organization chosen must be capable of providing the service requested. a 14c holder lacks the capacity to prepare our clients for competitive, integrated employment that will empower clients to maximize their potential, get off of public assistance, and become tax payers.

524 4<sup>th</sup> Street Des Moines, IA 50309-2364 – Tel: 515-281-1333 – 1-800-362-2587 – Fax: 515-281-1263 –  
<https://blind.iowa.gov>



Kim Reynolds  
Governor

Adam Gregg  
Lt. Governor

Emily Wharton  
Director

If you have any questions regarding this policy, you may contact me at 515-281-1334 or [emily.wharton@blind.state.ia.us](mailto:emily.wharton@blind.state.ia.us).

Sincerely,

Emily Wharton, MFA CPM  
Director, Iowa Department for the Blind

\* -- <https://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs39.htm#pagecontent>

\*\* -- <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/rsabvrs/index.htm>

524 4<sup>th</sup> Street Des Moines, IA 50309-2364 – Tel: 515-281-1333 – 1-800-362-2587 – Fax: 515-281-1263 –  
<https://blind.iowa.gov>

A proud partner of the  network