



# NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE HEAD INJURY ADMINISTRATORS

## Using Disability Innovation Funding to Support People with Brain Injury

The Department of Education recently released new funding under the Disability Innovation Fund. The aim of the program is to fund state agencies and nonprofits in the \$8-\$10 million range for model demonstration projects designed to develop, implement, refine, evaluate, and disseminate new or substantially improved model strategies or programs to transition youth and adults with disabilities to competitive integrated employment (CIE) in any one of five topic areas.

Two of these focus areas have particular relevance for people with brain injury.

- Early Intervention and Workforce Reintegration Strategies for Youth and/or Adults with Acquired Disabilities that Lead to CIE. People with acquired disabilities include people with brain injury.
- Justice-Involved Youth with Disabilities: Early Intervention and Reintegration from the Juvenile Justice System to the Community, Leading to CIE. Up to 49% of justice-involved youth have sustained at least one brain injury.
- In addition to the topics above, there is also an opportunity to combine topic areas or complete innovative activities not included as an option in the other topics.

### **Supporting People with Acquired BI In Securing CIE**

Some things you may want to consider in a grant under this topic could be:

- Conducting outreach and enrollment strategies, including by identifying participants through screening using NASHIA's Online Brain Injury Screening and Support System (OBISSS). OBISSS is a comprehensive and validated subscription service that utilizes the standardized and validated OSU TBI-Identification Method and the Symptoms Questionnaire for Brain Injury (SQBI). OBISSS allows individuals to self-administer the screening online. Upon completion of the screening, tip sheets addressing identified challenges are then provided to both the individual and the provider.
- Supporting transition and reintegration services by ensuring that transition providers are informed on the specific compensatory strategies to support someone with a brain injury in seeking services and leading to CIE.
- Partnering with service providers to support project participants in achieving their goals of CIE that is brain injury informed, including ensuring VR counselors, community-based employment service providers, job coaches and developers, and employers possess competencies to effectively support job seekers with BI.
- Participating in the design and delivery of Pre-Employment Transition Services (PRE-ets) designed in a tailored way for youth with acquired disabilities.
- Participation in NASHIA's Annual State of the States in Brain Injury conference, which includes topics specific to vocational rehabilitation.

## Supporting Justice-Involved People with BI In Securing CIE

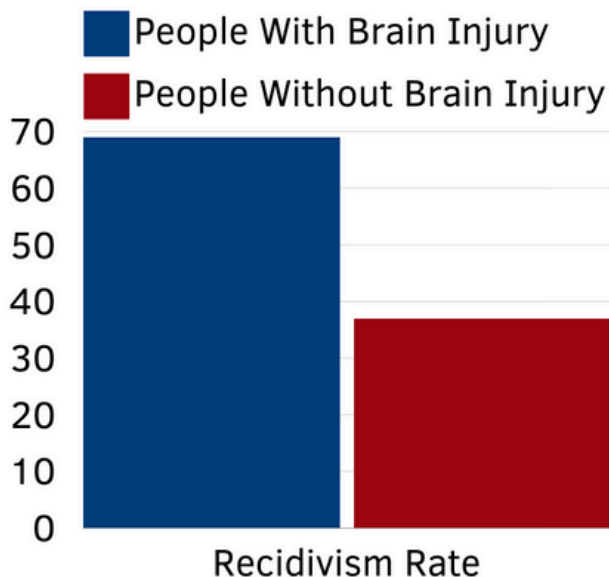
For the justice-involved topic, you could focus your project on supporting youth with brain injury in the criminal legal space. Below are some stats that highlight the prevalence of people with brain injury within these settings that may be helpful. Some things you may want to consider in a grant under this topic could be:

- Screening people for brain injury, including by utilizing NASHIA's Online Brain Injury Screening and Support System (OBISSS), as described above. OBISSS is being implemented in several criminal legal settings currently.
- Supporting pre- and post-release reentry plans people with BI transitioning from the juvenile justice system to the community through case management and brain injury resource facilitation.
- Developing models to navigate various systems for people with BI, which could include participation in NASHIA's Leading Practices Academy on the Criminal Legal System and Brain Injury
- Supporting professional development trainings through online, on-demand trainings for criminal legal and behavioral health professionals on brain injury basics, the importance of screening, screening implementation, the co-occurrence of brain injury and behavioral health, compensatory strategies to support people with brain injury depending on their specific challenges, etc.
- Participation in NASHIA's Annual State of the States in Brain Injury conference, which includes specific criminal legal system and brain injury programming.



Up to 49% of criminal legal involved youth have sustained at least one brain injury.

Individuals with brain injury have been shown to have a recidivism rate of 69% compared to 37% of those without a brain injury.



## Partnerships are Key

Given the large amount of funding under this solicitation, we encourage all partners to come together to support people with brain injury, regardless of the topic focus.

**State  
Justice  
Programs**

**State Brain  
Injury  
Programs**

**State  
Vocational  
Rehab or  
Employment  
Programs**

**Reentry  
Orgs**

**Brain  
Injury  
Partners**

**National  
Orgs**

**Other  
Relevant  
Partners**

**Job  
Specialists**

**Independent  
Living  
Partners**

## Inclusion for People with Brain Injury

Research highlights that individuals with brain injury may require specialized attention in employment. Tailored interventions for people with brain injury across vocational rehabilitation services ensures post-injury work placement and long-term well-being. Brain injury is a chronic condition, necessitating ongoing monitoring and customized treatment approaches to shape person-centered employment opportunities. Projects should consider the needs of brain injury as they facilitate successful return-to-work transitions to ensure individuals with brain injuries secure and maintain competitive, integrated employment.

*This document was created by the National Association of State Head Injury Administrators. The National Association of State Head Injury Administrators (NASHIA) is the leading source of information and education for brain injury training and support. NASHIA provides information on national trends, best practices, and technical assistance to a variety of partners. To learn more or partner on these activities, contact Zaida Ricker, Director of Strategic Partnerships and Policy, at [zricker@nashia.org](mailto:zricker@nashia.org).*