



**TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE and CONTINUING EDUCATION
CENTER: REGION IV**

*A Project of the Burton Blatt Institute at Syracuse University
in collaboration with the DBTAC: Southeast ADA*

**THE ROLE OF STATE VR AGENCIES IN WORKFORCE
INVESTMENT SYSTEMS:
CREATING A UNIVERSALLY ACCESSIBLE AND SEAMLESS
SYSTEM THAT MEETS THE NEEDS OF PERSONS WITH
DISABILITIES**

**Written materials Accompanying the
TACE CENTER : Region IV
Audio Conference
February 25, 2009**

**Prepared by
Bobby Silverstein
Powers Pyles Sutter and Verville, PC
Bobby.Silverstein@ppsv.com**

With Special Assistance by

**Laura Gleneck
Project Coordinator
NDI Technical Assistance Team
P: 617-489-0086
F: 617-489-1374
lgleneck@ndi-inc.org
<http://dpnavigator.net/>**

OVERVIEW

Under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended by Title IV of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 (P.L. 105-220), the Secretary of Education provides grants to assist states in operating “statewide, comprehensive, coordinated, effective, efficient, and accountable programs of vocational rehabilitation (VR), each of which is an integral part of a statewide workforce investment system.” As mandatory partners, State VR agencies are required to enter into “memoranda of understanding” with workforce agencies. In addition, the State plan must assure that the designated state unit or the designated state agency enters into cooperative agreements with the other entities that are partners under the One-Stop service delivery system and replicates those agreements at the local level. Cooperative agreements may include:

- Intercomponent training and technical assistance;
- The use of information and financial management systems that link all of the partners;
- The use of customer service features such as common intake and referral procedures;
- The establishment of cooperative efforts with employers to facilitate job placement;
- The identification of staff roles, responsibilities, and available resources and specification of financial responsibility of each partner; and
- The specification of procedures for resolving disputes among partners of the One-Stop delivery system.

In addition, under WIA, One-Stop Career Centers are expected to provide physical and programmatic access for persons with disabilities by complying with Section 188 of WIA (nondiscrimination/equal opportunity), including the WIA Section 188 Disability Checklist.

During the 108th Congress and the 109th Congress, bills were introduced and passed in the House and Senate but not enacted into law (the two bodies were unable to reach

agreement). Both the House and Senate bills strengthened the mandates to provide physical and programmatic accessibility for individuals with disabilities using One-Stop Career Centers. It is expected that the Rehabilitation Act and WIA will be reauthorized during this Congress and if the past is prologue, the bill will include provisions strengthening the physical and programmatic accessibility requirements and the role of State VR agencies in bringing about needed changes.

PURPOSE AND ORGANIZATION

The purpose of this paper is to assist State VR agencies fulfill their leadership roles and responsibilities in expanding and improving employment opportunities for persons with disabilities receiving services and supports in and through One-Stop Career Centers, including all aspects of the operation of these Centers—outreach, intake, screening and assessment, service delivery, evaluation, and operations/management.

Examples of approaches used by State VR agencies to expand and improve the efficacy of One-Stop Career Centers include:

- Establishing an interagency collaborative work group concerned with policy development and capacity building;
- Developing and using self-assessment and monitoring tools relating to physical and programmatic accessibility;
- Developing strategies for screening for hidden disabilities;
- Developing web-based training materials for certifying One-Stop Career Center staff competencies in serving persons with disabilities;
- Piloting promising practices and then replicating these practices statewide; and
- Developing practices that facilitate the implementation of a seamless system which includes expedited service delivery.

The paper is organized into four sections. The first section describes the key disability-related provisions that state and local workforce investment boards and One-Stop Career Centers must satisfy and the leadership role that State VR agencies are

expected to play in enhancing implementation. Sections 2-4 of the paper describe specific strategies, training and technical assistance tools and guides, and promising practices designed to expand and improve the experience and outcomes of persons with disabilities receiving services and supports in and through One-Stop Career Centers. The second section focuses at the national level; the third section focuses on the experiences of the eight states in the Southeast Region (Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee). The final section focuses on the experience of selected states in other regions.

SECTION I: REHABILITATION ACT AND WIA DISABILITY-RELATED PROVISIONS

As explained in the findings section of the Rehabilitation Act, the goals of our nation properly include the goals of providing individuals with disabilities with the tools necessary to achieve:

- Equality of opportunity;
- Full Participation;
- Independent Living; and
- Economic Self-sufficiency.

Under Title I of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), the State plan must, among other things, describe how the state will serve the employment and training needs of individuals with disabilities and must coordinate and cooperate with state vocational rehabilitation (VR) programs authorized under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act. Section 188 of WIA includes a prohibition of discrimination on the basis of disability regarding WIA participation, benefits, and employment.

On July 25, 2003, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) issued a compliance assistance “Section 188 Disability Checklist” designed to ensure equal opportunity/nondiscrimination for persons with disabilities. The Checklist is designed to ensure meaningful participation of people with disabilities in programs and activities

operated by One-Stop Career Centers receiving federal financial assistance under WIA. The Checklist identifies the basic disability-related requirements imposed by Section 188, including references to key sections in the regulations [29 CFR Part 37]. The electronic version of the Checklist includes hotlinks that connect directly with the text of the regulations. The Checklist also includes examples of policies, practices, and procedures and other steps that One-Stop Career Centers may follow to ensure equal access (including programmatic as well as physical access).

The structure of the Checklist is based on the nine elements of the “Methods of Administration” (MOA) a document the Governor is required to develop and adhere to under the Section 188 regulation. A State’s MOA outlines the policies, procedures, and systems that the state will implement in order to provide a reasonable guarantee that the state and the One-Stop Career Centers will comply with the nondiscrimination/equal opportunity provisions of Section 188 and the implementing regulations. The nine elements are:

- Designation of Equal Opportunity Officers
- Notice and Communication
- Assurances
- Universal Access
- Obligation not to Discriminate on the Basis of Disability
- Data and Information Collection and Maintenance
- Monitor for Compliance
- Complaint Processing
- Corrective Action/Sanctions

As mentioned above in the Overview section, during the 108th Congress and the 109th Congress, bills considered in the House and Senate included numerous provisions expanding and improving “**programmatic access**” for persons with disabilities. The Senate report accompanying its version of the bill explained that the term "programmatic access" means policies, practices, and procedures providing effective and meaningful opportunity for persons with disabilities to participate in or benefit from

Phone: (866) 518-7750 [voice/tty] • Fax: (404) 541-9002
Web: TACEsoutheast.org | Email : TACEsoutheast@law.syr.edu

*A Project of the Burton Blatt Institute (BBI) at Syracuse University | bbi.syr.edu
Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), Grant # H264A080021*

core, intensive, training, and support services. Programmatic access includes providing reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities, making reasonable modifications to policies, practices, and procedures, administering programs in the most integrated setting appropriate, communicating with persons with disabilities as effectively as with others, and providing appropriate auxiliary aids and services, including assistive technology devices and services, where necessary to afford individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in, and enjoy the benefits of, the program or activity. Key aspects of the "program" include registration, customer outreach, service delivery and coordination, and performance measures and outcome data collection. The Senate report also specified that the WIA Section 188 Disability Checklist provides useful information to states in meeting this requirement. In addition, the bills:

- Clarified the purpose section of Title I of WIA to “increase the employment, retention, and earnings of individuals with disabilities”;
- Specified that the State plan must describe how the state will serve the employment and training needs of individuals with disabilities, consistent with Section 188, including the provision of:
 - Outreach,
 - Intake,
 - Conduct of assessments,
 - Service delivery,
 - Development of adjustments to performance measures, and
 - Training of staff;
- Specified that local workforce investment plans must ensure physical and programmatic access for individuals with disabilities;
- Clarified that memorandum of understanding must ensure the needs of persons with disabilities are addressed in accessing services through the One-Stop Career Centers;
- Specified that the State Board must establish procedures and objective criteria for use by local boards in periodically assessing the effectiveness and physical and programmatic accessibility of One-Stop Career Centers;

Phone: (866) 518-7750 [voice/tty] • Fax: (404) 541-9002
Web: TACEsoutheast.org | Email : TACEsoutheast@law.syr.edu

*A Project of the Burton Blatt Institute (BBI) at Syracuse University | bbi.syr.edu
Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), Grant # H264A080021*

- Clarified that statewide employment and training activities must include, among other things, disseminating information on physical and programmatic accessibility for individuals with disabilities and providing technical assistance and capacity building; and
- Specified that state performance measures must ensure that the levels involved are adjusted, using objective statistical methods based on, among other things, disability status.

The bills also clarified the central role that State VR agencies are expected to play in ensuring implementation of these policies. For example, the Rehabilitation Act recognizes that:

- Increased employment of individuals with disabilities can be achieved through implementation of statewide workforce investment systems that provide meaningful and effective participation for individuals with disabilities in workforce activities as well as in activities carried out under Title I of the Rehab Act;
- Linkages between the VR programs and other components of the workforce investment system are critical to ensure effective and meaningful participation by individuals with disabilities in workforce investment activities;
- The VR program is an integral part of a statewide workforce investment system; and
- The provision of intercomponent staff training and technical assistance with regard to the promotion of equal, effective, and meaningful participation by individuals with disabilities in workforce investment activities in the state through the promotion of program accessibility and the use of nondiscriminatory policies and procedures.

It is likely that WIA and the Rehabilitation Act will be reauthorized during this Congress. As an “integral part of a statewide workforce investment system”, the State VR agency is expected to play a key leadership role in enhancing employment and training opportunities for persons with disabilities who receive services and supports in or through One-Stop Career Centers.

Phone: (866) 518-7750 [voice/tty] • Fax: (404) 541-9002
Web: TACEsoutheast.org | Email : TACEsoutheast@law.syr.edu

*A Project of the Burton Blatt Institute (BBI) at Syracuse University | bbi.syr.edu
Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), Grant # H264A080021*

SECTION II: NATIONAL INITIATIVES

The Department of Labor (DOL) has pursued several initiatives (past and present) designed to enhance training and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities participating in One-Stop Career Centers.

A. DOL Civil Rights Center

First, the **Civil Rights Center** (CRC), U.S. Department of Labor issued a WIA Section 188 Disability Checklist. [WIA Section 188 Disability Checklist](#) In addition, CRC has developed several power point presentations to accompany the Section 188 Disability Checklist. [Section 188 Disability Checklist Training](#); [Disability-Related Information: Asking, Telling, Using, Storing \(PPT\)](#)

B. DOL Employment and Training Administration

Second, the **Employment and Training Administration** (ETA) in conjunction with the Social Security Administration (SSA), supported Work Incentive Grants and is supporting Disability Program Navigators (<http://www.doleta.gov/disability/>) to help people with disabilities “navigate” through the challenges of seeking employment, including helping One-Stop staff in enabling people with disabilities to access and navigate the complex provisions of various programs that impact their ability to gain/retain employment.

Under WIA, the DOL/ETA directed funds and resources to improve workforce services for individuals with disabilities, including those with psychiatric and other non-visible disabilities. Funding for the Disability Program Navigator (DPN) Initiative was in response to barriers to One-Stop services including **physical and program accessibility**, and meaningful and effective participation of job seekers in the workforce investment system.

The goal of the DPN Initiative is to achieve more seamless, comprehensive, and integrated service delivery and supports that can expand the capacity of the workforce investment system to meet the employment objectives of customers with disabilities.

There are approximately 425 Disability Program Navigator (DPN or Navigator) positions housed in local workforce investment areas across forty-two states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico (http://www.doleta.gov/disability/new_dpn_grants.cfm) to provide seamless employment services to individuals with disabilities seeking to enter the workforce.

A Disability Program Navigator is a:

Systems Change Agent. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Improved access to One-Stop Career Center services through readily available assistive technology.
- Development and implementation of a reasonable accommodation policy and procedure.
- Training on serving customers with disabilities as part of One-Stop Career Center new-hire orientation.

Problem Solver. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Identifying appropriate community resources for job seekers with disabilities to remove barriers to employment (i.e., training, transportation, housing, assistive technology needs, etc.).
- Finding the answers to questions that One-Stop Career Center staff have regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or other disability-related topics.

Relationship Builder. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Consulting with mandated and non-mandated partners regularly about accessibility, accommodations and other disability-related topics.

- Organizing or joining an interagency collaboration which focuses on accessibility, sharing of resources and/or improving employment outcomes for persons with disabilities.

Resource. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Being available to answer questions staff have on serving job seekers with disabilities.
- Presenting orientations on WIA and One-Stop Career Center services to a wide variety of community service providers.
- Coordinating workshops in One-Stop Career Centers on disclosure, reasonable accommodations, work incentives and job seekers' rights and responsibilities under the ADA.
- Offering information to the business community on hiring/retaining individuals with disabilities.

Facilitator. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Bringing together multiple partners who are working with one individual to foster a collaborative effort using an integrated resource team approach.
- Improving communication between the One-Stop Career Center and partners by educating both about their systems.

Set out below are selected resources available on-line developed for use in One-Stop Career Centers to address the employment needs of job seekers with disabilities.

One-Stop Toolkit for Serving People with Disabilities --

<http://www.onestoptoolkit.org/>

This website provides accessible and comprehensive tools and information to grantees that provide services that help individuals with disabilities find and keep good jobs. The resources on this website will help grantees widen the array of services available to

individuals with disabilities at One-Stop Career Centers, and integrate those services seamlessly into One-Stop operations.

This website is targeted toward state and local One-Stop service providers, but it contains resources that will be useful to a broader audience as well. Individuals with disabilities, advocates, parents, counselors and other professionals should find a rich source of information here.

DPN Technical Assistance Project -- <http://dpnavigator.net/>

DPNavigator.net represents the technical assistance project website for the Disability Program Navigator Initiative. This website, developed and maintained by the national technical assistance provider, NDI Consulting, Inc. includes both extensive archived materials from the past six years of DPN training and technical assistance activities and newly developed materials that add to the extensive body of knowledge on DPN best practices that improve system collaboration and individual employment and economic outcomes.

Navigator Resources

The resources and tools found under the “Navigator Resources” section of DPNavigator.net represent exemplary practices and materials that align with and promote the DOL and SSA vision of the Disability Program Navigator Initiative. The tools and resources contained in this section have been developed specifically for Disability Program Navigators by the National Technical Assistance Team, and the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, National DPN Program Office.

- Disability Expertise:

http://dpnavigator.net/pages/resources_a3.html

Disability expertise pertains to the knowledge of staff within the One-Stop Career Centers related to the employment issues of persons with disabilities. This section includes information and resources pertaining to disability expertise.

- Accessibility:

http://dpnavigator.net/pages/resources_a4.html

Regardless of how great the information and relationships are relative to disability employment within the One-Stop Career Center, people with disabilities can only benefit to the degree they can access those resources. This section includes information and resources pertaining to physical, programmatic and attitudinal accessibility.

- Problem-Solving:

http://dpnavigator.net/pages/resources_a5.html

Problem-Solving is the degree to which the One-Stop Career Center focuses on solutions for the needs of One-Stop Career Center job seekers with disabilities, and builds its capacity to do so. This section includes information and resources pertaining to problem-solving.

- Sphere of Influence:

http://dpnavigator.net/pages/resources_a6.html

The Sphere of Influence is the degree to which the One-Stop Career Center's perceived expertise in employment issues for persons with disabilities is valued highly enough by community partners and businesses to be solicited as they pursue their own missions. This section includes resources to addressing obstacles to employment, and partnering with other agencies, the disability community, and the broader community to address them.

C. DOL Office of Disability Employment Policy

The **Office of Disability and Employment Policy** (ODEP) supported a center operated at the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) that developed extensive materials

Phone: (866) 518-7750 [voice/tty] • Fax: (404) 541-9002
Web: TACEsoutheast.org | Email : TACEsoutheast@law.syr.edu

*A Project of the Burton Blatt Institute (BBI) at Syracuse University | bbi.syr.edu
Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), Grant # H264A080021*

designed to enhance opportunities for all special needs populations, including persons with disabilities through the adoption of universal strategies and customized employment. <http://onestops.info>. Set out below is a representative sample of some of the materials developed by the center.

Access for All Manual –

www.communityinclusion.org/onestop/onestopmanualcomplete.pdf

One document developed by ICI was “ACCESS FOR ALL: A RESOURCE MANUAL FOR MEETING THE NEEDS OF ONE-STOP CUSTOMERS WITH DISABILITIES”. This comprehensive manual can be downloaded for free.

Policy Papers and Information Briefs –

<http://onestops.info>

The web site also includes numerous policy papers and briefs written by Bobby Silverstein, including:

- Policy Brief: Using the Emerging Disability Policy Framework to Create a Fully Inclusive Twenty-First Century Workforce Investment System (June 2002).
- Provisions in the Workforce Investment Act Relating to Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability and the Development by the Governor of Methods of Administration
- Policy Brief: Side-by-Side Comparison (From a Disability Perspective) Between the Senate Bill (S. 1021) and the House Bill (H.R. 27) Reauthorizing the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) (July 2006).
- Analysis of WIA Section 188 Methods of Administration Plans From A Disability Policy Perspective (April 2004).
- Policy Brief: Provisions in the Final Regulations Governing the State VR Program Describing the Interplay with WIA and TWWIIA (February 2001).

Universal Design and One-Stop Career Centers

In addition, ICI developed several documents related to universal design for all persons serviced by One-Stop Career Centers. Good customer service means providing a welcoming environment, respectful treatment, and needed information. Universal Design (UD) provides an important toolset for companies seeking to provide these advantages for their customers and for their employees, who also want to feel welcome and respected, and who require adequate and timely information to do their jobs.

ODEP promotes and has shown that UD as a service-delivery strategy can meet the diverse needs of all customers, particularly youth and adults with disabilities, mature workers, veterans, the chronically homeless, and those with limited English proficiency.

UD is a lens through which every aspect of a business can be viewed (its products, services, physical environment, communications, and technology) and a set of tools by which products, services, customer satisfaction, and strategies that attract and retain employees of all abilities--ultimately results in increased profitability and success for companies.

ODEP has promoted the development and replication of universally designed best practices that increase programmatic and physical accessibility, enhance market-driven skills development, and foster collaboration through the [findings of its past Customized Employment projects](#).

[ODEP's Universal Design and Universal Strategies Fact Sheet](#)

This fact sheet answers the questions on what is Universal Design and universal strategies and how they can assist a company in attracting and keeping a diverse workforce and customer base.

[Universal Design for the Workforce Development System Toolkit](#)

This toolkit, developed by the [National Center on Workforce and Disability](#), is a collection of tools, online training modules, and best-practice findings from the field, all of which are deigned to promote a workforce-development system that is both

Phone: (866) 518-7750 [voice/tty] • Fax: (404) 541-9002
Web: TACEsoutheast.org | Email : TACEsoutheast@law.syr.edu

*A Project of the Burton Blatt Institute (BBI) at Syracuse University | bbi.syr.edu
Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), Grant # H264A080021*

responsive to local needs and realities, and able to meet the needs of its diverse businesses and career seeker customers. Taken together, these tools form a comprehensive system evaluation and change curriculum which users can customize to best meet their state and local needs.

Other Universal Design Resources

[Principles of Universal Design](#)

The Principles, conceived by UD advocates in 1997, established a valuable language for explaining the characteristics of Universal Design. They are in common use around the world, sometimes with slight modifications, primarily one or two principles grouped together.

[Institute for Human Centered Design](#)

Also known as Adaptive Environments (AE), the Institute is a 30-year old international non-profit organization, based in Boston, committed to advancing the role of design in expanding opportunity and enhancing experience for people of all ages and abilities. The organization's [UD site](#) provides the principles, history, experts, resources, and more.

[Ronald L. Mace Universal Design Institute](#) (under construction)

[The Center for Universal Design](#)

The Center for Universal Design (CUD) is a national information, technical assistance, and research center that evaluates, develops, and promotes accessible and universal design in housing, commercial and public facilities, outdoor environments, and products.

Job Accommodation Network

ODEP also supports the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) <http://www.jan.wvu.edu>. JAN is a free service. JAN's mission is to facilitate the employment and retention of workers with disabilities by providing employers, employment providers, people with

disabilities, and their families and other interested parties with information on job accommodations, entrepreneurship, and related subjects.

D. Additional National Technical Assistance Resources

At Your Service Webcourse –

www.wiawebcourse.org

DBTAC Network of ADA Centers developed “AT YOUR SERVICE:WELCOMING CUSTOMERS WITH DISABILITIES,” which represents a self-paced webcourse for people interested in discovering best practices for working with customers with disabilities.

The At Your Service webcourse is organized into a Pre Test, 15 self-paced topics, and a Post Test. Before starting the topics, you will be directed to complete a Pre Test. The first seven topics explore various core concepts such as Disability Etiquette, the Workforce Investment Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act. The other eight topics are individual case studies that offer the opportunity to practice the information presented in the first half of this course. After completing all topics, a Post Test will be available (and if you score 90% or better, you may apply for CEU & CRCC Credit).

All fifteen (15) topics contain 1-5 pages of relevant information and real-life examples, including any applicable legal cases. Some topics contain multiple-choice or true/false "Apply Your Knowledge" questions and additional "Tell Me More" resources. A "Glossary of Terms" and Resources are also available for further reference throughout the course.

Topics include:

- Serving people with disabilities
- Charting the Course
- Disability Etiquette
- Legal Framework

Phone: (866) 518-7750 [voice/tty] • Fax: (404) 541-9002
Web: TACEsoutheast.org | Email : TACEsoutheast@law.syr.edu

*A Project of the Burton Blatt Institute (BBI) at Syracuse University | bbi.syr.edu
Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), Grant # H264A080021*

- Universal Access
- Accommodations
- Disability Rights

SECTION III: SOUTHEAST REGION STATE INITIATIVES

Alabama

Mapping Access to Program Services

<http://rehab.alabama.gov/maps>

The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services and the Department of Economic and Community Affairs has established a separate web site to provide One-Stop Career Center customers with disabilities and staff serving them with resources to maximize a customer's success in locating any and all services needed by them to become successfully employed. The project is currently funded from a Disability Program Navigator grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration.

The site offers One-Stop Career Center staff with tools, information, and educational materials to better service customers with disabilities, including

- Power Point presentations on subjects related to serving people with disabilities, including video clips of subject matter experts, employers, and persons with disabilities who have worked through job accommodations on subjects related to serving people with disabilities;
- Fact sheets on various conditions;
- Disability etiquette handbook;
- Policies and procedures for One-Stop Career Centers based on laws affecting people with disabilities;
- Guidelines for determining accessibility; and
- Guidelines for universally accessible workstations.

Phone: (866) 518-7750 [voice/tty] • Fax: (404) 541-9002
Web: TACEsoutheast.org | Email : TACEsoutheast@law.syr.edu

*A Project of the Burton Blatt Institute (BBI) at Syracuse University | bbi.syr.edu
Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), Grant # H264A080021*

For example, the guide for recommended policies and procedures includes a general discussion of Section 188 of the Workforce Investment Act (nondiscrimination), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act and then includes specific recommended policies related to reasonable accommodation requirements and procedure for requesting accommodations, disclosure of personally identifiable information, confidentiality, effective communication, integrated settings, release of information, and emergency preparedness procedures.

E-Learning Modules

<http://www.rehab.state.al.us/maps/ELearningModules.aspx>

On-line instruction developed by Alabama's MAPS Project for the Alabama One-Stop Career Center staff that contains a spectrum of learning modules for Career Center staff to be better prepared to serve customers with disabilities. The curriculum is comprised of 14 Modules that contain a variety of downloadable materials and cover areas that include disability etiquette, the ADA, emergency preparedness, disclosure of disability to employers, and information on specific types of disabilities.

Universally Accessible Work Station

<http://www.rehab.state.al.us/maps/ResourceDocuments.aspx>

Descriptive chart of the Universally Accessible Workstation that is present in all comprehensive One-Stop Career Centers in Alabama. The chart includes the product names of the assistive technology (AT) installed on the work stations, descriptions and photos of each AT installed, and the type of user who would benefit from each AT.

Video Interpreting System

A Video Interpreting System (VPAD) was recently installed to facilitate effective communication with individuals who use sign language interpreters. The system allows immediate access to a certified interpreter through video technology when a customer who is deaf enters the One-Stop Career Center. Center staff may not know sign

language but with the VPAD will have easy communication with their customers who are deaf.

For more information contact: **Karen Carden** at email: KarenCarden@aol.com or by phone at (205) 994-4148.

Florida

In addition to the usual efforts of co-location, cost sharing, board and committee memberships, set out below are some additional ideas which may be helpful regarding working with the one stop career centers:

- Use the Navigators at the one stop centers to train VR counselors and technicians about how they can help people who have the Ticket to Work and are also placed on the VR wait list so that the counselors can then pass on information about the Ticket to Work.
- Collaborate with one stop job fairs, including meeting the need for interpreters or other language translators.
- Refer VR consumers to various workshops available at the one stop centers. These workshops can be very useful, and include writing resumes, preparing for interviews, conducting job search on the one stop computers, etc.
- Use the one stop resources to subsidize vocational training as a comparable service.
- Coordinate outreach efforts, sharing potential contacts and resources.

For more information contact: **Alan Zauche** by email at Alan.Zauche@VRFlDoe.org.

Georgia

In Georgia, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program is part of the Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL), which affords Georgia VR a unique direct connection to workforce services. As an integral part of the statewide workforce investment system,

the VR program facilitates its customers' access to the training and other employment-related programs provided by the GDOL Career Centers and other One-Stop locations.

The goal of service integration between the VR Program and Career Centers is to identify the services a job seeker needs and then match the available GDOL resources that are best to effectively serve the individual job seeker, whether disabled or not.

One outcome of the GDOL service integration is being piloted in four sites statewide where designated VR staff work with designated Career Center staff to provide an Orientation, Ability and Service Identification Seminar (OASIS) for VR clients in applicant status or job ready status. This seminar orients participants to VR and Career Center services at the same time, while identifying participants' skills, interests and job goals. Some VR applicants may be identified to move directly into Career Center job search activities while others will be identified to continue with VR services to prepare for their careers. Career Center staff will inform individuals who enter Career Centers and identify themselves as having a disability about VR Services and refer those interested to the OASIS.

A primary focus of Georgia's Disability Program Navigator (DPN) initiative has been to strengthen the ability of GDOL Career Centers and other One-Stop locations across the state to provide welcoming, accessible service to people with disabilities. To this end, Georgia's DPN team conducted hundreds of learning sessions for Career Center and other One-Stop staff on topics including the following: People First Language, Assistive Technology and Accessibility, Natural Supports and Essential Job Functions, Disability is Natural, Serving Customers with Disabilities, Focus on Abilities, Disability Etiquette, and Deaf and Hearing People Working Together. The DPN team sought VR staff expertise and partnership in providing this training. These learning sessions served as excellent preparation for Career Center customer service to VR customers taking part in OASIS.

Also, as part of the service integration and in recognition of the strong linkages to local community resources, the GDOL Commissioner selected the DPN team to develop

comprehensive resource manuals for each Career Center to have as another tool to assist customers.

For more information, contact Daronne Patterson, Senior Planner Georgia Department of Labor Rehabilitation Services by email at daronne.patterson@dol.state.ga.us or by phone (404) 232-3929

Mississippi

The Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS) is a combined agency that includes four program offices: 1) Office of Vocational Rehabilitation; 2) Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind; 3) Office of Special Disability Programs; and, 4) Office of Disability Determination Services. During the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) era, the MDRS Executive Director served on the state Private Industry Council (PIC), placed high-ranking agency staff on the local PICs, and approved agency-operated youth programs under JTPA, which helped strengthen the agency's relations with the state's planning and development districts (current fiscal agents for the state's local workforce investment boards, or LWIBs). When the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 mandated VR as a partner, the MDRS Executive Director was invited to the table for his input in establishing the One-Stop system in Mississippi, and he made the role of VR as a viable participating partner in this system a high priority for the agency.

Set out below are some of the key steps MDRS took to build strong relationships in the state's workforce system, which includes the most significant activities, pursued by MDRS staff to definitively establish the VR role in WIN in Mississippi. These significant initiatives (past, present and proposed for the future) evolve around education and training as well as collaborating with workforce system partners to strengthen delivery of services to mutual customers.

For more information contact: **Cindy Goodin**, One-Stop Coordinator, Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services by email at Cindy.Goodin@mdrs.state.ms.us or by phone at (601) 853-5302.

Steps for Building a Successful Relationship

- **Leadership.** The vision for the agency starts at the top.
- **Existing Relationships.** MDRS maximized the advantage developed over time by building on existing relationships.
- **Representation on LWIB.** MDRS placed high-ranking staff that could make decisions on the LWIBs.
- **Dedicated Liaison Position.** MDRS established a dedicated, high-ranking position within the agency to serve exclusively as a liaison between the agency and the WIN system.
- **Carefully Selected Staff.** MDRS selected the most competent staff to place in WIN Job Centers to help make our partnership work there. In addition, MDRS provided training to the counselors to help clarify their roles.
- **Diligence in Attending Meetings.** The workforce liaison and his staff attend all State Workforce Investment Board meetings, in which the MDRS Executive Director is an active member. This staff also attends the LWIB meetings and other related local, state, regional, and national workforce meetings to stay informed and connected.
- **Attitude, Flexibility, Mutual Respect.** MDRS endeavored to find ways to cooperate and make the partnership work within the WIN system. A big step towards success is the mutual respect all the partners share within the WIN system. The WIN system recognizes MDRS as the expert when working with people with disabilities and understands that the agency has something to offer to improve the workforce system for all individuals in our state.

Activities to Establish VR Role in WIN

1. **WIA Youth Programs.** Local Workforce Investment Area (LWIA) Youth Councils award grants to MDRS on a competitive basis annually to provide specialized services to youth who are mutual clients of the VR program and the WIN system. The grant programs also provide disability awareness and

technical assistance to other providers of youth services funded as well through the LWIA Youth Councils.

2. **WIN-CAP Project.** Funds were provided to MDRS by the designated state agency for administering WIA to create an individualized, person-directed case management system so that each WIN Job Center customer has a significant, meaningful job-related outcome. The project was successful in improving coordination and linkage of partner services within the WIN system as well as demonstrating the effectiveness of a pilot Disability Program Navigator position in two of the WIN Job Centers.
3. **WIN-ACE Project.** Funds were provided to MDRS by the designated state agency for administering WIA to ensure access to services for WIN participants with disabilities through accessible facilities, accessible programs and services, and assistive technology. Funds were provided for MDRS to hire a technical person to implement the accessibility survey tool developed by the U.S. Department of Labor and to collaborate with LWIA staff in implementing recommendations listed in project survey reports. Additionally, funds were utilized to procure for the WIN Job Centers assistive technology with an emphasis on programmatic accessibility. This project was later expanded to provide funds to MDRS to share the costs of administering the state's Disability Program Navigator Initiative.
4. **WIN-MORE Project.** Funds were provided to MDRS by the designated state agency for administering WIA to produce a marketing video to educate WIN system staff, workforce partners, job seekers, and employers about VR services. Through this project the agency was able to improve visibility of VR services provided within the WIN system.
5. **Disability Program Navigator (DPN) Initiative.** Funds were provided to MDRS by the designated state agency for administering WIA to establish a DPN project. The purpose of the DPN Project was to increase the access that customers,

including individuals with disabilities, have to workforce development services available through WIN Job Centers. The Navigator's role was to improve the coordination, collaboration, and service delivery practices among WIN system partners for customers with barriers to employment. Mississippi's Navigators accomplished the program goals by effectively imparting partner program and service information to WIN Job Center customers and staff, facilitating referrals to partner programs, providing or facilitating staff training, assisting in the development of a case management model for the state's workforce system, and improving job opportunities for persons with disabilities.

6. **Access for All.** Through one of the listed projects above, MDRS ensured that every WIN Job Center has this manual to help address accessibility issues in the centers. Development of the Access for All manual was a project of the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston. The intent of this manual is to serve as a training and staff development tool for enhancing the ability of One-Stop Systems to meet the needs of customers with disabilities, and also as a reference work for ongoing use as needed in serving people with disabilities.
7. **The 10 Commandments of Communicating with People with Disabilities.** Through one of the listed projects above, MDRS ensured that every WIN Job center has this DVD to help staff develop a basic level of comfort and understanding about how to effectively communicate with people with various disabilities.
8. **Annual Governor's Workforce Development Conference.** Every year MDRS has a representative on the Advisory Committee for this conference to ensure that disability-related topics are included in the workshops provided. VR staff actively participates in providing these workshop presentations as needed.
9. **One-Stop University.** Mississippi established a One-Stop University (OSU) to provide professional workforce development staff training to all partners in the

WIN system. MDRS has two representatives on the OSU Advisory Committee to assist in the development of the training curriculum, including disability-related topics. VR staff is available to provide possible disability-related training at the OSU as needed.

10. Customized Employment. Various MDRS staff continues working to incorporate the customized employment concept within the WIN system.

11. Southeastern Employment and Training Association (SETA). The WIA Liaison and his staff are active members of SETA.

12. Staff Development Training. MDRS has 24 staff housed full time in eight WIN Job Centers around the state. This staff is called upon many times to conduct staff development trainings at their respective WIN Job Center to educate WIN staff on VR services, how to work with people with disabilities, disability sensitivity and etiquette training, and other disability-related topics as the need arises.

13. National Disability Employment Awareness Month. On the same designated date in October, which is generally set aside as National Disability Employment Awareness Month, VR staff around the state provide disability-related training to staff in every WIN Job Center.

14. Access to Employment Security Information Network. MDRS collaborates closely with the Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES) on access to their data to facilitate a more effective exchange of information for the purpose of promoting the Work Opportunity Tax Credit and employment verification. MDRS also has limited access to the MDES Information Network to view job orders listed by employers with them through the WIN Job Centers and to check wage records. Not all job orders listed by employers through the WIN Job Centers are available for public viewing. Therefore, the ability to view job orders on the MDES database enhances employment opportunities for people

with disabilities. Additionally, the ability to check wage records assists VR staff with follow-up activities on their VR clients.

15. AWARE VR Case Management System. MDRS utilizes AWARE (Accessible Web-based Activity and Reporting Environment), a fully integrated, comprehensive case management software system designed by and for public VR agencies. Designed to mirror the case management process, the system utilizes web technology to automate essential functions. The AWARE system's sophisticated architecture supports workstation access in the field, works well with accessibility tools and provides a secure information environment. Representatives from MDES and the state's workforce system have viewed AWARE at an MDRS site and are interested in developing a similar system to eventually use in the WIN Job Centers. Management Information Systems staff from MDRS has responded to highly technical questions submitted by MDES regarding AWARE in another collaborative effort to breach technology gaps in the workforce system in order to better serve mutual customers.

16. Career Readiness Certificate. The Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) is a credential based upon the WorkKeys assessments that substantiate to employers that an individual possesses the basic workplace skills required for 21st century jobs. The CRC verifies that an individual can handle such common and vital tasks as finding information, reading instructions and directions, and working with figures. Individuals wanting to take the CRC are required to qualify by reaching acceptable levels on the KeyTrain pretests. KeyTrain is a targeted curriculum written specifically to help people master the applied workplace skills as defined by WorkKeys. KeyTrain is available on the public computers at the WIN Job Centers. However, the question has been raised that KeyTrain may not be accommodating to people with disabilities. MDRS hopes to address the issues with KeyTrain by working with WorkKeys' parent company as well as the WIN system to ensure that people with disabilities benefit from this highly touted system of credentialing.

17. State Workforce Investment Board. MDRS is represented on the State Workforce Investment Board by our Executive Director. He is highly active on this Board and participates on a couple of select subcommittees. One of the subcommittees is responsible for developing the Mississippi Integrated Workforce Performance System. This innovative system is specifically designed to: 1) promote data sharing to reduce duplication of services, measure performance, calculate return on investment, and identify best practices; 2) enable more efficient resource management for workforce development activities across agencies and funding streams; 3) help state agencies better meet federal reporting requirements; 4) provide forecasts for promoting workforce initiatives; and, 5) create an online collaborative information system.

North Carolina

In 2003, the North Carolina State VR agency received a two year "Work Incentive Grant" (WIG) from the Division of Workforce Development, NC Department of Commerce, via the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration. The WIG program was designed to support policy development and systems change activities that would improve access and effective participation of persons with disabilities in the new One-Stop delivery system, in North Carolina it is the JobLink Career Center, established under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. As a WIG grantee, VR was challenged to facilitate a seamless system of universal access for youth and working age adults with disabilities. The WIG program was to serve as a facilitator for One-Stop Career Center staff and the many agencies and partners who are part of an emerging workforce system that is charged with keeping pace with changing local market needs. As a facilitator, WIG programs were bringing mandated and non-mandated partners together to improve service coordination and physical, information technology and program accessibility.

To address these themes, the grant has:

- Implemented Widening Our Doors training for One-Stop Career Center staff through the Workforce Development Training Center,
- Conducted employer training events to educate employers on the benefits of further diversifying their workforces by hiring persons with disabilities and how to use their local One-Stop Career Center to help them do this, and
- Created a marketing video and companion brochure for businesses that highlight employer success stories experienced from having hired workers with disabilities.

WIG Phase II – The NC Division of Workforce Development provided additional funding following the end of the DOL/ETA funding. The purpose of the additional funding was to strengthen and expand employer relations to create more job opportunities for persons with disabilities.

The grant goal:

- Build relationships and understanding with employers: One-Stop Career Center, with its partnerships, is the One-Stop resource for companies with hiring needs;
- Create employer awareness that there is an untapped labor market of qualified people with disabilities; and
- Dispel the myths & discomfort of employing people with disabilities.

In addition, NC VR has equipped numerous One-Stop Career Centers with various types of equipment and resources that assist persons with disabilities with access and accessibility issues. NC VR also collaborates with North Carolina Disability Program Navigator project.

For more information, contact: **Brenda S. Williamson**, DVRS, Employment Services at Brenda.S.Williamson@ncmail.net or by phone (919) 855-3553.

South Carolina

The South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department has developed the Skilled Workforce Apprenticeship Training (SWAT) program to provide additional training and

employment opportunities for its clients. This program involves several partners: SCVRD, employers, adult education, and the One-Stop centers.

Employers agree to provide on-site training opportunities with employment possibilities for clients selected via an interview process. The available jobs are profiled by VR partners in the local One-Stop system using the WorkKeys program. Potential training candidates are assessed with WorkKeys in the local VR offices through a partnership with adult education. Candidates meeting the established profile and other employer requirements are then eligible to begin participation in the SWAT program. Candidates are provided a training stipend which is provided by both SCVRD and the employer. Upon successful completion of the training, candidates are hired by the employer.

For more information about the SWAT program, contact **Anne Iriel**, Director of Program Development by email Airiel@scvrd.state.sc.us or by phone (803)896-6581.

Tennessee

Even though the Tennessee Division of Rehabilitation Services (TDRS) is under a state department and the state department head is the designated State Workforce Board member, the Director of TDRS serves as the proxy for the state department head, thus allowing TDRS direct participation in State Workforce Board meetings and on sub-committees. TDRS supports 23 co-located vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselors in local One-Stop Career Centers statewide. They have at least one co-located counselor in each Local Workforce Investment Area (LWIA). These counselors consult on and receive referrals for TDRS services, participate in cross-informational training with other partner staff and act as consultants for disability related issues.

Consistent with WIA and Rehabilitation Act regulations, TDRS has Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with all LWIAs. These MOUs detail the participation of the VR counselors in career center activities and describe the referral process to TDRS. Of particular interest is the attachment that spells out specific terms and conditions agreed to by TDRS.

TDRS has conducted accessibility and accommodation surveys for over 25 One-Stop Career Centers. TDRS is frequently called on for advice on accessibility and accommodation when a TDLWD or LWIA owned One-Stop Career Center is constructed or remodeled.

TDRS was part of the TDLWD team that toured the state to train the LWIA administrative entities on developing resource sharing agreements required by the US Department of Labor.

VR counselors work very close with the Tennessee Disability Program Navigator project. The state has been fortunate to be able to continue this program through partial support by TDLWD and a one year grant extension. However, this program is in jeopardy of losing TDLWD funding due to the state's financial crisis.

For more information contact **Joel Blackford**. He can be reached by phone at (615) 313-4898 or by email at Joel.Blackford@state.tn.us.

SECTION IV: INITIATIVES IN OTHER STATES OUTSIDE OF THE SOUTHEAST REGION

Alaska

Alaska DVR played a large role in helping develop and implement their Disability Program Navigator project, which the state Division of Employment Security, Alaska's one-stop operator, has since taken lead on throughout 7 One-Stop Career Centers in Alaska. This project came in close alignment with building on the best practices and lessons learned from the Customized Employment project. Alaska DVR now plays a close supportive role in helping ensure this project results in a long-term sustainable benefit for customers throughout Alaska.

Alaska's workforce leaders implemented a new "Job-Center Service Integration Committee" that represents the major One-Stop related leadership throughout Alaska. This committee is helping guide, support and develop the infrastructure necessary for

these and other similar seamless oriented service initiatives to ensure they are part of Alaska's sustainable workforce system in providing seamless delivery. Alaska DVR continues to play a major role in this evolution.

For more information about Alaska VR agency's experience implementing Customized Employment and DPN strategies, contact **Margie Thomson** (email: Margie.Thomson@alaska.gov).

Arizona

In 2003, The Arizona Rehabilitation Services Administration (AZRSA) applied for and received the Disability Program Navigator project. The Arizona DPN program was small at first with funding for salaries and employment related expenses for 8 positions. The first two Navigators were hired and only one was trained for the position. The DPN coordinator was also the Ticket to Work coordinator for RSA and started the first Employment Network Association which began partnerships with MOUs to have shared and joint cases for Ticket to Work and RSA consumers. The DPN coordinator was able to find support to hire and house Navigators in the One-Stop Career Centers without money for occupancy, supplies, travel and training. This was the key for the system change and collaboration to take place and a bridge was built to coordinate, collaborate and facilitate.

The second year saw major accessibility barriers removed in One-Stop Career Centers. The establishment of the Equal Opportunity Administrator has made a significant improvement into the access issues and support for the Navigators. The impact of the DPN program has seriously started a movement to remove barriers. In addition, teams were established of trainers, Assistive Technology specialist, Internet Technologist, and financial support to make sure that equipment purchased was in fact used by trained staff instead of left in un-opened boxes in a closet.

Arizona RSA has built an accessible website <http://www.atarizona.com> which includes pictures, maps and directions, online training, feedback, current events, linkages, resources, and locations of One Stops, providers and partners. The website captures

Phone: (866) 518-7750 [voice/tty] • Fax: (404) 541-9002
Web: TACEsoutheast.org | Email : TACEsoutheast@law.syr.edu

*A Project of the Burton Blatt Institute (BBI) at Syracuse University | bbi.syr.edu
Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), Grant # H264A080021*

the effort of the training, and accessibility with all the partners and the special populations who need the services to find and secure services to find suitable employment.

The professional Navigator has been accepted as a change agent and bridge to improve services to persons with disabilities in One-Stop Career Centers. The Navigator program has shown the worth and impart of bringing the partners, employers, board members, resources, accessibility, training, and information to everyone. Sustaining the Navigator program is being considered as a priority by AZRSA and the WIA partnership and has been identified in the State Strategic Plan as a program for improving services integration.

For more information contact **Melissa Williams** (email: MWilliams@azdes.gov)

California

In California, the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) was instrumental in creating the Universal Access Workgroup and implementing the Workforce Investment Resources and Accommodations Project.

Universal Access Workgroup

The Universal Access Workgroup (UAWG) is an interagency collaborative work group of the California Workforce Investment Board (CWIB). The primary focus of the UAWG is policy development and capacity building related to programmatic and physical access issues for individuals with disabilities in the workforce investment system. The work of the UAWG is designed to assist State and local governments, One Stop Operators, and Local Workforce Investment Boards to integrate the access requirements of non-discrimination law into the local One Stop systems.

The UAWG enacted:

- The development and release of a comprehensive physical access self-assessment process. This tool was released to the One-Stop Career Centers

May 2002. This tool is considered to be a first step in assisting One-Stops to become physically and programmatically accessible to customers with disabilities.

- The Learning Disabled Workgroup which identifies strategies and methods for One-Stop staff to utilize when working with people with this disability and other hidden disabilities.

Workforce Investment Resources and Accommodations Project

The DOL Work Incentive Grant (WIG) Round II was awarded to the California Department of Rehabilitation in coordination with the California Workforce Investment Board (WIB) and a consortium of partners. The grant funded the Workforce Investment Resources and Accommodations Project (WRAP). Over a 30-month period the WRAP developed a 15 semester-hour training certificate training for the Workforce Accommodation Specialist Program (WASP). WASP provided continuing education for new personnel who will be serving as specialists for consumers with disabilities and employers available through the One-Stop Career Center system. The WRAP was established prior to the Disability Program Navigator Initiative and the training and information developed was used as a basis for California's implementation of its DPN project. In addition, funding was provided for the provision of auxiliary aids and services with the One-Stop system with ongoing consultation and technical assistance services.

For more information contact: **Desi Malone** (email: desi.malone@edd.ca.gov)

Iowa

In Iowa, strong collaboration among state agencies interested in strengthening employment services to Iowans with disabilities has resulted in the creation of a "Governance Group" of seven agency leaders who meet on a quarterly basis. The Iowa VR agency facilitates the activities of the group that in 2003 developed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) designed to establish an on-going commitment to collaboration at

all levels of service delivery. The MOA continues to provide a foundation for collaboration and ongoing resources to local administrative and service staff as well as providing a forum for sharing current and future best practices among partners who are working to strengthen employment services to lowans with disabilities.

Systems Change Pilot

In 2000 –2003 a successful systems change pilot project in Sioux City was monitored by the partner agencies of the Iowa’s Governance Group. The lessons learned from the project demonstrated a potential statewide model for providing services to participants, who due to disability were also eligible for VR services.

As a result of collaborative efforts between the State VR Agency, State Workforce agency, and the State agency responsible for human services, the partner agencies are now replicating key strategies of the pilot project in eight locations throughout the state.

The strategies currently being implemented include:

- Developing the capacity within Iowa One-Stop workforce systems to address the needs of job seekers with hidden disabilities, including the education of One-Stop Career Center staff, about disability and collaborative planning
- Identifying participants with hidden disabilities;
- Providing a broader range of accommodated services; and
- Achieving stronger self-sufficiency outcomes for these participants.

In August, 2008 the eight regions involved in the Disability Initiative described above participated in an ICN discussion to review outcomes and to make recommendations.

The participants agreed that best practices in this initiative have resulted in:

- Employment plans that are developed collaboratively when a client is served by both IVRS and PROMISE JOBS. This has also helped all parties to accurately communicate and understand the services provided by each program;
- A data tracking plan on shared client outcomes;

- Appropriate client referrals to the Disability Specialist from the PROMISE JOBS caseload has been identified

State and Regional Level Initiatives

In addition to the Disability Specialist Project that grew out of the Sioux City pilot, the Governance Group is also providing oversight and guidance to the Iowa Work Incentive Planning and Assistance (Iowa WIPA) initiative designed to support all Iowa SSA beneficiaries in pursuing their career objectives and effective management of their benefits and work incentives; the Iowa Disability Navigator project that facilitates access to employment services at One-Stop Career Centers for job seekers with disabilities; and the Employers Disability Resource Network (EDRN: <http://www.edrnetwork.org/>) that develops and mobilizes resources, supports and services adding value to Iowa businesses hiring persons with disabilities.

For more information contact **Stephen Wooderson** (email: Stephen.Wooderson@iowa.gov)

Maine

In Maine positive working relationships have been fostered between the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services and the Bureau of Employment Services due to strategic efforts to promote collaboration both from the top down and the bottom up. With both Bureaus housed in the Department of Labor, management teams on both sides regularly work together to reach Department goals. In most One-Stop Career Centers, Vocational Rehabilitation is co-located with WIA and Wagner-Peyser services. Maine's commitment to share expertise between the Bureaus was exemplified by the decision to pursue Disability Program Navigator grant funding. The Bureau of Employment Services is the grantee but partnered with Bureau of Rehabilitation Services staff to develop the grant proposal and that staff person, the Manager for Systems Improvement and Quality Assurance, continues to provide support to Maine's DPN project and assists with supervision of the Lead Disability Program Navigator. This unique arrangement allows

for effortless sharing of information and greater ease in implementation of ideas and strategies for improvement.

In the One-Stop Career Centers, co-location has allowed for joint staff training and easier cross-referral between VR and One-Stop Career Center programs. Accessibility has become a shared concern. In addition to co-enrollment, One-Stop Career Center workshops are open to VR clients and VR orientation sessions share information on One-Stop Career Center resources that applicants can participate in while waiting for services. VR Counselors regularly contact members of the DPN team to request information for their clients or to guide clients between programs. Integrated Resource Teams have been another way of bringing joint resources together – many times with the DPN as a facilitator. Co-location has had the added benefit of bringing many people with disabilities and service providers into the One-Stop Career Center. Initial contact with VR may lead to a continued relationship with the One-Stop Career Center programs. SSA’s Community Work Incentive Coordinators (benefits specialists) use One-Stop Career Center space to meet with their customers – which include both VR and One-Stop Career Center customers among others. As the Bureau of Employment Services pilots operations as an Employment Network (EN) through the Ticket to Work Program, the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services has been consulted to learn from their experiences working with the Ticket to Work Program and to assist in developing a model to implement EN services. These are just a few examples of the many ways that VR and the One-Stop Career Centers are working to maximize services and opportunities for workers and job seekers with disabilities in Maine.

For more information contact: **Libby Stone-Sterling** (email: Libby.stone-sterling@maine.gov)

Missouri

Under Title II of the ADA and WIA Section 188, One-Stop Career Centers must ensure that communications with individuals with hearing or speech disabilities are as effective as communications with others. Although many One-Stop Career Centers may

advertise that they “Provide Auxiliary Aids upon Request”, they may not understand the wide range of services and devices that this implies. Auxiliary aids can include qualified interpreters, assistive listening systems, handset amplifiers, telephones compatible with hearing aids, open/closed captioning, telecommunications devices (TTY/TDD), Communication Access Real-time Translation (CART) services, videotext displays, and note-takers. Several Disability Program Navigator projects have really moved on addressing the particular access issues involving job seekers who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing effectively utilizing the One-Stop Career Centers.

The Navigators through the Missouri Disability Program Navigator project were instrumental in working with several state agencies to identify a resource—UbiDuo a two-way communication device—to work around this challenge and respond to the needs of Deaf and individuals who are hard of hearing in the One-Stop system in a timely manner. The state was able to secure special pricing on this device because each of the local Workforce Investment Boards, Vocational Rehabilitation and the state Division of Workforce Development all worked together to obtain a quantity discount. As a result of this collaborative partnership, there will be an UbiDuo system in each One-Stop Career Center.

For more information contact: **Kristin Funk** (email: Kristin.funk@ded.mo.gov)

New Mexico

The DPN project in New Mexico is designed to strengthen connections between persons with disabilities, disability resources, community, partners, DVR and the New Mexico One-Stop Career Centers (Workforce Connection Centers). Disability Program Navigators develop linkages & collaborate on an on-going basis with employers to facilitate job placements for persons with disabilities. Navigators assist One-Stop Career Center staff by providing training and other resources to more effectively provide services to individuals with disabilities.

As DVR employees, Navigators are able to work with the field staff to effectively provide information about services to customers and in addition, refer individuals that would be

eligible for Title I services. The cross connection between WIA services and VR services is very beneficial to the community. Navigators work with individuals and others to promote employment and careers; train staff, other partner agencies and others on disability issues; work with employers to help understand ADA and reasonable accommodations; provide information about Social Security, TANF, Housing and other community resources that may be affected by earnings. Navigators will provide the bridge between services, service providers and customers, provide information to employers about ADA, reasonable accommodations including doing an accessibility study for the employer, provide information and referral services as necessary to everyone and provide support for the community to better access service, resources, training and other opportunities for employment.

Navigators function as VR employees but also as a resource provided by the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions. VR counselors realize the value of the Disability Program Navigators and are able to utilize resources from a larger and more diverse group. Navigators are viewed as partners for everyone and to further the creation of the One-Stop system. Often times individuals with the most need to utilize the services and resources of systems are unable to access these services due to a variety of reasons, Navigators are able to assist these and other individuals to utilize services and obtain employment or the services necessary to meet their career goal.

Navigators have been long challenged by lack of coordination and collaboration that exists within the community. By working jointly with partners in the community, Navigators are able to find resources for individuals to help them achieve their vocational goals. In addition, Navigators are individuals within the system that are able to bring individuals and resources together without customers knowing who is doing through an Integrated Resource Team approach. Several databases have been created to insure that resource directories are available statewide and are being updated by agencies to insure the accuracy of information.

The New Mexico DPN project has adopted a “Laptop loan program) under which it purchased over 100 laptop computers with assistive technology, which are lent to

persons with disabilities who are seeking employment. The program design allows individuals with disabilities to borrow laptops for a 3 to 6 month period utilizing the laptop for job searches, updating/obtaining computer skills, training or self-employment with limited paperwork. The program is free, statewide and is available in areas of New Mexico that have limited resources for persons with disabilities. The laptops are wireless, allowing people without Internet services or in remote areas of the state to do Internet job searches, take on-line courses, apply for jobs on line. In addition some have been utilized for individuals to become self-employed while waiting for the resources from other providers.

For more information, contact: **Mary Modrow** at 505-798-0445 or mary.modrow@state.nm.us

Oregon

In Oregon, many One-Stop Career Center (Worksource Center) locations use a Business Representative to provide a consultative approach to serving business customers. The goal is to meet with business customers, understand their workforce needs, and then collaborate with workforce system partners to design a package of services that meet the business' needs. This collaboration also includes economic development as a workforce partner in order to develop comprehensive solutions for our business customers.

In collaboration with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Oregon Business Leadership Network (OBLN) provides Oregon businesses with networking opportunities, education, and resources to effectively increase understanding and awareness of disability issues in the workplace. The OBLN partners work with the workforce system to articulate the business case for employment of persons with disabilities and to promote the availability of business incentives (tax credits, tax incentives and other resources). Navigators with the Oregon Disability Program Navigator project play a key role in introducing OBLN to local communities/businesses throughout the state. Navigators in

each region have developed brochures and newsletters that target the employer community.

For more information contact: **Rachel Soto** (email: Rachel.A.Soto@state.or.us)

Utah

MOUSE Committee

In 2001, Utah established the Memorandum of Understanding to Support Employment (MOUSE) Committee. This Committee includes the Utah VR agency and the Utah DOL agency (the Department of Workforce Services--UI, TANF, Wagner Peyser services). The focus of the Committee is to proactively address the objectives of the mandated MOU between the agencies. Addressed were the areas of:

- Pathways (e.g., regional and statewide best practices/areas for improvement identification, establishing a process pattern in each agency for received referrals based on shared forms)
- Cross-training (e.g., web-site based materials, including “solutions” page)
- Information/Data Sharing (e.g., data systems linkages, emphasis to staff on confidentiality of shared data elements))
- Accessibility (e.g., review for accessibility under Section 188, website based linkages to ADA coordinators)
- Employer Relations (e.g., establishment of “supply-side” program specialist position, launch Governor’s Committee website).

Choose to Work Initiative

The Utah State VR Agency, in partnership with the Utah Department of Workforce Services, established a “Choose to Work” (CTW) initiative. The purpose of the CTW Initiative provides individualized job development and job placement to eligible job seekers with disabilities. The CTW program is a statewide program jointly administered and funded by the State VR agency and the Department of Workforce Services. The

CTW program placement specialists are located in both agencies and cross-serve clients/customers of both agencies. CTW staff are shared between the agencies and they take referrals from both.

Work Ability Utah

Additionally, the Utah State VR Agency, partnering with the Utah Departments of Workforce Services and Health have established Work Ability Utah, a cooperative operating under a Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG). Work Ability is a cooperative works to serve as a one-stop for information on employment of people with disabilities and has established an employer network for hiring individuals with disabilities.

For more information contact: **Russ Thelin** (email: rthelin@utah.gov).

Wisconsin

The Wisconsin Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (WDVR) is pursuing several strategies to increase integration and accessibility for persons with disabilities in the workforce investment system in general and the One-Stop Career Centers in particular. WDVR initiated its efforts in the mid 1980's, before enactment of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) by co-locating into One-Stop Job Centers in a few counties and insisting on program and physical accessibility in those centers. WDVR's efforts have accelerated and expanded since enactment of WIA, especially since a One-Stop Job Center cannot be certified as a Comprehensive Job Center, unless a VR agency participates as a mandatory partner.

WDVR, recognizing the need for inclusion and accessibility for ALL persons with disabilities in One-Stop Job Centers, continues to work directly and through the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) towards universal access to all of Wisconsin's 75 Job Centers, including individuals with the most the most significant disabilities. In Wisconsin this goal means providing universal access for all services, including the core, intensive, and training services available to nearly 800,000 citizens with disabilities.

Wisconsin DVR is co-located in 22 Hubs and has staff assigned or a program presence in an additional 44 satellite sites. The efforts by WDVR and DWD have benefited VR consumers in a number of ways including:

- Increased the programmatic as well as physical access, of persons with disability within the Workforce Investment System.
- Co-location through closer physical proximity to WIA Mandatory “One-Stop Service Delivery” partners has increased interagency communication and corresponding partner service access for VR consumers.
- VR consumers have been able to successfully “cross walk” between agencies resulting in more efficient and greater program access.
- WDVR orientation sessions can provide individuals with information on the resources available to them at the One-Stop Career Centers.
- VR consumers placed on the WDVR waitlist are provided referral and resource information on the One Stop Career Centers.
- WDVR has been working to assist all “job ready” consumers to sign up for the Wisconsin Job Center website where they can be connected with over 10,000 employers and access employment search resources.
- WIA agency walls have disappeared through closer partner agency collaboration. Resulting in expedited service delivery for persons with disability.

For more information on WDVR's job center partnerships and experience, contact **Mike Greco**, WDVR Bureau Director of Consumer Services at Michael.greco@dwd.state.wi.us or 608-261-4576.