



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

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

ROLE OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCIES IN THE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT SYSTEMS

Date of Event: February 25, 2009

Presenters: Bobby Silverstein, Laura Gleneck, Cindy Goodin, Karen Cardin and Darlo Koldenhoven

Moderator: Eve Hill

Overview

Eve Hill: Good morning, everyone. Thank you for joining us for this Audio-conference on the Role of VR Agencies in Workforce Investment Systems. We are very excited to have all of you with us today. My name is Eve Hill. I am the Senior Vice President of the Burton Blatt Institute of Syracuse University. We work with the TACE Center Region IV. The TACE Center's mission is to improve the quality and effectiveness of vocational rehabilitation services and enhance employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities in 8 states, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee and South Carolina. It is a collaboration with the DBTAC—Southeast ADA Center, and both the TACE and the DBTAC are managed by the Burton Blatt Institute at Syracuse University.

We are privileged to be joined by our featured speaker, Bobby Silverstein. Before we start, there are a few items you should know. Individuals are joining us today using a variety of media, including telephone and real-time captioning. During the Q&A, we will make sure we take questions from the telephone audience and questions submitted to the operator and the captioner. All the materials were provided to the site coordinators prior to the audio-conference. An e-mail was sent on Tuesday with the call-in

instructions and access to the session materials through the Southeast TACE website, which is www.SoutheastTACE.org. The format for today is as follows: Bobby and the other speakers will speak for about 45 to 60 minutes and at the conclusion of that section, there will be an opportunity for everyone to ask questions for about half an hour. The operator will provide instructions when we are ready to take questions. Depending on the number of questions we have, we may not be able to address all of your issues today. We encourage you to follow up with questions by phone at 866-518-7750 or by e-mail to tacesoutheast@law.syr.edu.

Now it is my pleasure to introduce Bobby Silverstein. Bobby is a nationally recognized disability policy analyst with over 30 years experience directing action research and analysis of complex public policy issues with a particular emphasis on disability-related policy. Mr. Silverstein is a Principal with Powers, Pyles, Sutter and Verville, P.C. where his practice focuses on disability, healthcare, rehabilitation, education, Social Security and civil rights. He is also the director for the Center for the Study and Advancement of Disability Policy. He does a lot in this area.

Also joining us is Laura Gleneck, who is the Vice-President of NDI Consulting and serves as Project Coordinator for the Department of Labor's Work Incentive Grants and Disability Program Navigator Initiative. Also Cindy Goodin, who is the One-Stop Coordinator with the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services and has coordinated the agency's activities in the WIN job centers since 2003. And Karen Cardin, who is the Mapping Access Program Services Coordinator and Lead Disability Program Navigator in Alabama and previously she was the Staff Development Coordinator for the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services. And Darlo Koldenhoven, who is the Assistant Director of the Georgia Department of Labor Vocational Rehabilitation Program and has worked in the rehabilitation field since 1979. I will turn the program over to Bobby.

Bobby Silverstein: Thank you, Eve and welcome to all. Just as a preliminary matter, I want to make sure that you have the two sets of materials. You should have a

PowerPoint as well as a 27-page paper to accompany the PowerPoint, which includes a list of comprehensive references to all of the national and state documents that we will be referring to throughout the audio-conference. For those of you that have the PowerPoint on your computer, I am going from the cover page, skipping over the “presented by” page. I am now on page three, Overview.

Slide 3: Overview

In 1998, Congress passed the Workforce Investment Act. Title I of that Act required the establishment of a statewide workforce investment system and the establishment of One-Stop Career Centers. Title IV of the legislation amended the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, including Title I, which establishes the federal-state partnership program providing VR services to folks with significant disabilities. In this legislation, Congress chose to ensure that VR programs would be an integral component of the statewide workforce investment system. It also made sure that One-Stop Centers would meet the needs of individuals with disabilities by providing physical and programmatic access. Now, Congress also expected that the VR agencies would play a leadership role in ensuring that access was provided to people with disabilities in the One-Stop Centers. And, although the Rehab Act and WIA Title I have not been reauthorized in the last two Congresses, there were Bills pending. In each of those Bills, the role of VR as a change agent in terms of the generic Workforce Investment Act were strengthened, as were the roles and responsibilities of One-Stop Career Centers in the requirements to ensure physical and programmatic access.

Slide 4

Thus, if you move to slide four, the purpose of this presentation is to assist State VR agencies in fulfilling their leadership roles and responsibilities to ensure that people with disabilities have effective and meaningful opportunity to benefit from the training and other services and support provided in One-Stop Centers. This leadership role includes

all aspects of the operation of One-Stops, including outreach, intake, screening and assessment, service delivery, evaluations, and operations and management.

Slide 5: Organization of the Presentation

Next slide - Organization of the Presentation. We are going to, basically, be focusing on four components. First, I am going to lay the policy framework by describing the key disability-related provisions in the WIA as well as the provisions in the Rehab Act that prescribe VR's leadership role. Then we're going to share with you some national TA initiatives, followed by presentations from several of the states in the Southeast region in terms of some of the things they are doing and, finally, present initiatives from around the country next in terms of the other states.

Slide 6: Congressional Expectation- VR and Generic Systems

We go to the next slide, Congressional Expectation - VR and Generic Systems. Now, I will get into the meat of the presentation. First of all, is the policy framework. Many of you know that we had something called the CETA Program and then the CETA program was replaced by JTPA - the Job Partnership Training Act. A lot of people under JTPA basically said that if a person with a disability walked into a center, they were told, automatically, to go to VR. Some people with disabilities do not need comprehensive Vocational Rehabilitation Services, so VR would say, sorry, we do not serve you and people would be left out in the cold, so to speak. So, Congress in the late 1990s had a choice. They wanted to figure out how to fix the system, the generic system. They had to figure out the role that VR might play. Congress, basically, had three options. They could have one system and repeal Rehab and have everyone, including people with significant disabilities, served by a generic system. Or, it could have two distinct, separate systems, one for people with disabilities and one for everyone else. Or, Congress could create a seamless system with no wrong door, under which the VR program would be a distinct program, but it would be a part of a seamless system.

Slide 7:

Clearly, Congress chose the latter approach, the one that has VR as a distinct program within a seamless system. Now, in the course of doing this, Congress made some other decisions. That was, what should be the role of VR agencies? How do they fit into this seamless system? Well, in the Amendments to the Rehab Act, Congress explicitly stated that VR would be an integral part of the statewide workforce investment system. There would be requirements for Memoranda of Understanding, cooperative agreements. They then specified some key roles and responsibilities - inter component training and technical assistance was a role prescribed for VR. To use information and financial management systems that links all of the partners. To have a common intake and referral procedure; and cooperative efforts with employers to specify financial responsibility. In a nutshell, VR was expected, under the legislation, to serve as a change agent, to enhance effective and meaningful opportunities for people with disabilities served in the One-Stop Centers. Now, in carrying out this leadership role and change agent role, VR was clearly expected to follow a certain set of values and principles that are set out in the Rehab Act in Section II. More importantly, VR as a change agent was expected to impart these values and principles into the people working in the generic systems, so that people understood what we all refer to as the new paradigm of disability policy. We rejected the old paradigm that looks at people with disabilities as defective, dependent folks who need others to provide not only guidance but direction and make decisions. We reject that approach and, instead, recognize as we do in Section II of the Rehab Act that disability is a natural and normal part of the human experience and in no way diminishes a person's right to fully participate in all aspects of society, including employment. We are also guided by the goals of national disability policy in our role as change agent, to enhance equality of opportunity for people with disabilities, meaning to treat people as individuals based on facts, based on promising practices, not based on fear, ignorance, prejudice and administrative convenience; to ensure effective and meaningful opportunity provided in the most

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integrated setting appropriate. The second goal, being full participation that we, again, expect that people with disabilities will make decisions for themselves that reflect the concepts of self-determination, informed choice, empowerment and self advocacy. The third goal, independent living, that that is a legitimate outcome of public policy that we need to provide independent living skills and services and supports. The fourth goal is economic self-sufficiency - jobs, jobs, jobs - and making work pay by trying to address some of the work incentives that are available and where work disincentives still exist, trying to advocate for change.

Slide 8

I am moving now to the next slide, slide eight. One of the key provisions in the Workforce Investment Act, in addition to the state plan provisions that require that the needs of people with disabilities be specifically addressed and described, but the key provision is Section 188 of the Workforce Investment Act that ensures equal opportunity and prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability. We also need to look at the implementing regulations.

Slide 9:

Next slide. The key document, in my opinion, to help explain the rights of people with disabilities to access to the One-Stops and the key document describing the roles and responsibilities of One-Stop Career Centers is the Section 188 disability checklist. This is a very, very critical document. It is a document that was developed in 2003. It really provides the framework for the physical and programmatic access for people with disabilities. Now, in describing and issuing this checklist, the Department of Labor, the Civil Rights Center, made it clear that this check list does not create new legal requirements or change current requirements. It is just to serve as a Basic Resource document to ensure physical and programmatic access, to ensure effective and meaningful opportunity for people with the disabilities.

Now, the checklist is modeled on nine elements from the regulations dealing with what is called MOA, Methods of Administration. Under the regulations, each governor is required to establish and adhere to this Method of Administration. It has nine components. So, when the Department issued this checklist, it used these nine elements.

Now, why is this document so important from my point of view? This document is critical because not only does it describe the key policy requirements, but it also provides a significant number of examples of practices in the text as well as the Appendix that explain how the general statements of policy and the regulations apply in the context of One-Stop Career Centers. Again, these practices are not mandatory. They do not create new requirements. They just help explain how the standards are applied in various situations.

So, under a designation of equal opportunity officer, which is a requirement, and you have examples that describe the education, training and experience that should be applied to the officers, there is a Notice and Communication element. Again, that describes specific examples of what you should do. One example is if you use marketing, recruitment and other materials that indicate a telephone number that the material should include either a TTY number or the relay service number. There are provisions dealing with universal access, Element Four. Some of the examples, for example, the recipient of a contract consults with specific community or advocacy organizations that provide services to persons with disabilities about plans to educate them about the recipient's programs. Another example is a recipient undertakes outreach. They try to get input from people with disabilities in terms of what they need. Another example is they take steps to improve operational collaboration. That is, establish partnerships and linkages with other entities in order to develop a common intake, sharing customer outreach services, delivery, core service sharing and more effective performance measures. Element Five, nondiscrimination, which includes the obligation to provide accommodations, reasonable modifications, services in the most

integrated setting appropriate and effective communication. There are 15-20 different examples in the Appendix dealing with registration and orientation, initial screening and assessment, service delivery, continuous improvement. So, here is a quilt of information that will help form the basic framework for ensuring physical and programmatic access.

Slide 10: Congressional Expectation

To go to the next slide, the question is, we have not had a reauthorization of the Rehab Act or Title I, WIA creating the One-Stops. We will, most likely, almost certainly, in this Congress. I think it is worth taking a moment to reflect on what are some of the provisions that have been in these Bills in the past. This is going to suggest a heightened, expanded role for VR in ensuring that One-Stops have physical and programmatic access. If we look at some of the provisions in the House and Senate Bills, you can get a sense of the expanded role that VR might play.

First, in terms of the state plan, the Senate and House language expand on the responsibility of the plan to describe how the state will serve the employment and training needs of individuals with disabilities consistent with Section 188. There is now an explicit reference to this Section 188 that I made reference to. They want to ensure that there is access or you are meeting the needs in terms of average intake, conduct of assessment, service delivery, performance measures and training of staff. There are requirements that the MOAs that you have entered into actually, specifically, address the needs of individuals with disabilities. There are specific functions that are set out for the State Board that address physical and programmatic access as well as specific provisions of dealing with the local Workforce Investment Plan. There are requirements that the State Board establish procedures and objective criteria for assessing the effectiveness of the physical and programmatic access. So, we are not only talking about requirements but implementation of them. Then, expectations that there will be statewide employment activities that include technical assistance and capacity building. Then, you see in the Bills that the role and responsibility of VR as the change agent are also enhanced. So, in summary, the expectation for VR is clearly to serve individuals

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with the most significant disabilities consistent with the Order of Selection requirements, but there are two additional roles: Work with employers and also serve as the literal change agent with respect to One-Stop Career Centers.

I am just going to briefly mention because of time constraints that you all know there is a Stimulus Package and there are significant increases, specific earmarked money for VR - \$540 million to be spent over the next two years. This is substantial money. \$10 million for Alabama over two years, 32 for Florida, nine for Kentucky, seven for Mississippi, at 18 for North Carolina almost 10 for Georgia and South Carolina and over 10 for Tennessee. Also, Laura might mention later, but for those that are concerned, the Navigator program has been funded in a separate package - or will be shortly. There is now the 2009 Omnibus Appropriation Bill that has been conferenced with the Senate that will provide over \$17 million for work. It says and that the report with it increased—it is intended to allow for the integration of disability Navigators into the One-Stop Centers in all participating states in evaluation of the progress to date in reaching the goals. That is good use on both fronts.

Slide 11: National Initiatives

The next page, national initiatives. Now, we will switch gears. I wanted to cover the policy framework and foundation. Now, I want to talk about the resources that are available to help VR agencies carry out their leadership change agent responsibilities. First, we have the Section 188 checklist. Again, the paper that I gave you that accompanies the PowerPoint has 30 hot links. One is to the disability check list. You should know that the disability check list in turn, has a hot link to go to where they make a statement about what the underlying policy requirement is, they have an actual link to the regulatory provision so that you can click on the actual regulatory language. CRC, the Civil Rights Center also made a Power Point training to accompany this checklist. This PowerPoint is current with one exception. There are a number of slides that deal with the definition of disability. Many of you know that there was the ADA Amendments Act and that it restored the scope of coverage expected from Congress when we

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passed the ADA initially. I have developed a Power Point, if any of you are interested, that describes the major changes. The PowerPoint is accompanied by a set of comprehensive Notes. You would all be free to use these materials for doing training of employers or others. In addition, CRC has a very, very critical PowerPoint on disability-related inquiries. This was a very impressive document, which basically describes the rules governing when you can ask, making reports about whether a person has a disability, and describes a totally distinct responsibility when you deal with service-related standards when you provide services to people. You have much more flexibility to ask questions versus when you are an employer or act as an employment agency. There are a whole different set of rules. This PowerPoint provides clear policy guidance with respect to those.

Slide 12: National Initiatives- Employment and Training Administration, DOL

And now, I am going to skip to the next slide, Slide 12. These are some initiatives by the Employment and Training Administration, in the Department of Labor. The first is a One-Stop Toolkit for Serving People with Disabilities. This document has extensive links, tools and resources, Glossary of key terms, state and local resources, and makes reference to the Disability Program Navigators and extensive course references and links to other resources.

Next, we are going to talk about the Disability Program Navigator Technical Assistance Project. I am going to give that over to Laura to describe the project and materials that are available.

Laura Gleneck: Great. Thank you, Bobby and hello, everyone. The Disability Program Navigator initiative, also known as DPN as the acronym, is administered by the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration, also known as the National DPN Office. The DPN initiative was implemented in 2003 in response to barriers, to One-Stop services including physical and program accessibility, a

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meaningful and effective participation of job seekers with disabilities. In the workforce investment system and you will see that it is closely aligned with what Bobby was sharing earlier about the purpose of vocational rehabilitation. Both are to address the needs of job seekers within the workforce investment system. The goal of the DPN initiative is to achieve a more seamless, comprehensive and integrated service delivery and support that can help expand the capacity of the workforce investment system to meet the employment objectives that job seekers with disabilities have.

What does a Disability Program Navigator do? They improve access to programs and services within the One-Stop Career Centers for job seekers with disabilities. They help to facilitate integrated, seamless and comprehensive services and support by One-Stop Career Centers to persons with disabilities. They help improve linkages to the employer community and work very closely with the business services within the One-Stop Career Centers to ensure that marketing and outreach materials include job seekers with disabilities, and to ensure that employers know about supports and services to allow them to hire and retain job seekers with disabilities.

Disability Program Navigators also bring together multiple partners to foster a collaborative effort by building an Interagency Action Group or an interagency team or committee, depending on what they are called. It includes members from the workforce system and VR. On that level, they are really trying to address system-wide, system-level issues that job seekers might face. They also bring together integrated resource teams to address the individual needs for the job seeker with a disability, bringing the different partners to the table to see what each partner can do to address the needs. Again, you could understand the integral role that VR would play as a partner at this table. The DPN often does sound like it is the same role as the vocational rehabilitation counselor. However, it is important to note that according to the DPN position description, and this is what is included in that scope of work that every project receives, that navigators will complement rather than duplicate the responsibilities and functions of vocational rehabilitation professionals.

So, what are some of the things that navigators help vocational rehabilitation counselors do at the community level? Within the One-Stop and VR, they help to share information. They help with training. They help with joint training. Many times the navigators might go to a local agency and provide training on services for VR customers with disabilities at the One-Stop Center. Likewise, VR agents come to the One-Stop Centers to talk about what they can offer and make sure that the customers are integrated. As a result of this relationship, some of the things that have happened are that there are more improved referral processes. VR is referring customers directly to the One-Stop and the One-Stop, when they see customers that can benefit from not only One-Stop services but from VR services, refer them to vocational rehabilitation. They use common intake forms in which there is one form that a customer with a disability can use that gathers the information for the One-Stop and Vocational Rehabilitation along with other disability partners within the community.

They also conduct co-enrollment, realizing that a job seeker with a disability can benefit from services within the One-Stop Career Centers as well as vocational rehabilitation. An example of that might be that a customer could obtain training through workforce investment system within the One-Stop Career Centers but might not be able to gather money to provide accommodations, such as a sign language interpreter. That is where VR, as a strong partner, can cover those funds. They also work to blend funds to address job seeker's needs. That is one example. The Integrated Resource Team is another example. Since 2003, the Employment and Training Administration funded three rounds of DPN Projects. There are currently about 425 Navigators across 42 states, plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. The department of Labor Employment and Training Administration will soon be funding four new DPN programs in the remaining states and territories that do not have a program. That includes the states of Nevada, Arkansas and the territories of Guam and the Virgin Islands.

As Bobby said, we are all very excited to see that the combined appropriation helps with continued funding for fiscal year 2009 to continue the DPN initiative, realizing the

importance of having a Navigator within the One-Stops working very collaboratively with partners such as vocational rehabilitation. By VR working very closely with the DPN system to create a universally accessible and sustainable system that meets the needs of persons with disabilities. We also have, in addition to the One-Stop toolkit that was developed by the National DPN Program Office; we have a website that was created as a technical assistance project for the DPN initiative. It includes both extensive and archived materials from the past six years of DPN training and TA activities, plus newly developed materials on DPN Best practices that encourage improved system collaboration, it individualizes employment. That is detailed in that it is accompanied by print material and talks about the different resources that are available. We do hope that you access them and use them, make them available. They are really created to help any workforce professional who is trying to provide increased and enhanced employment opportunities for job seekers with disabilities through the workforce investment system. With that, Bobby, I will turn it back to you.

Slide 13: National Initiative- Office of Disability and Employment Policy and RSA

Bobby Silverstein: Thanks, Laura. If we go to the next slide, it is a slide that is the National Center on Work Force and Disability, at the Institute for Community Inclusion. The Office of Disability and Employment Policy, ODEP, for a number of years funded it to develop comprehensive materials to enhance access, effective and meaningful opportunity to participate, physical and programmatic access and to develop what is called customized employment and a universal strategy plan for meeting the needs of all folks in special populations, including people with disabilities. They have developed and, again, the paper provides hot links to all of these documents, it is a comprehensive manual. I noticed for example, that Cindy in Mississippi uses this resource, this manual, and that this is part of helping One-Stops in your state understand their responsibilities. This is a 300-page document, which has incredible amounts of information, how to meet the needs of people with disabilities, legal requirements, physical access, etiquette, fact

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sheets on a range of disabilities, job accommodation information, job placement, SSI and DI issues, transportation and comprehensive links to other resources. This is a document that is a valuable resource about policy papers and information briefs that I wrote over time, and then you have a number of additional links to others that are focusing on universal design. I wanted to spend a few minutes here. One of the documents, two of the documents that they developed—a universal design and universal strategies fact sheet and the universal design for work-force development system—are an incredible resource. This document starts with people with disabilities but is it written generically so that the notion is if you meet the needs of peoples with disabilities, you can meet the needs of all customers served by One-Stop Career Centers, including others with special needs. The document actually uses generic references, rather than disability. It has an a phenomenal amount of information on how a One-Stop should address the various roles and responsibilities that are assigned to it, ranging from outreach to intake to screening to assessment, service delivery, evaluation, operations and management. There are 15-20 topics under each heading, different best practices that were learned over the years on how to meet the needs of people with disabilities in One-Stop Career Centers.

Slide 14: State Initiatives- Office of Disability & Employment Policy

In addition, you have, developed at the Disability Technical Assistance Centers, an actual on-line web course that could be used by staff in One-Stops to understand the rights of peoples with disabilities and their roles and responsibilities. They have 15 self-paced topics, pre and post tests on a range of issues. Again, a really terrific resource for staff in One-Stops and VR, as well. I will now turn to Karen and ask her to describe some of what is happening that Alabama.

Slide 15: Southeast Region State Initiatives

Alabama

Karen Goodin: Thank you, Bobby. In Alabama, we have been working on developing and addressing a systemic level change and putting in some structures that will ensure sustainability of the efforts. One of the first things we did is use the WIA Section 188 Checklist and put that Checklist into a chart format where we could reference the Section and the Law, the underlying policies, and have a format where we would put our findings and solutions and costs and plan of action. We can look at the status and when we resolved the issue.

We have taken that document and worked with our state ADA Coordinator who is a VR employee and looked at all of the Centers and address the barriers in collaboration with the ADA Coordinator and the VR engineers. We have looked at how we can address all of those barriers and identified them and worked with getting additional grant money from other sources to actually make those changes in the Centers that cost money. We recognize the need for Policies and Procedure Guides for serving people with the disabilities. We have developed that idea, specifically, for the Career Centers, again, with our ADA coordinator and the other tools that are available through the One-Stop Tool Kit. It is part of the state workforce plan, the state plan they have in place. We are excited about that.

We also developed recommended procedures for emergency preparedness policy and procedure that was translated into Spanish for the Career Centers. Through those moneys that we got through writing other projects, writing for other projects, we established for all of our comprehensive centers, a universally accessible workstation. This workstation is composed of items that will facilitate the access to the Career Center services by people with various disabilities. Just to give you examples, we have now a 19-inch monitor with a movable mounting arm and flat screen monitor with zoom magnification and JAWS for people who are blind or visually impaired. We have Open

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Book Software there. We also have a CC television for people with low vision and scanners and for people who are hard of hearing or deaf, we have the pocket talker. More recently, we are implementing a video interviewing system throughout the state. We have written additional money for this from one of our partners. We are currently installing it at 11 sites around the state a video entertainment system. This allows a person who is deaf to have immediate access to a qualified, certified sign interpreter. This was a big partnership with Vocational Rehabilitation. In fact, had we not had diversified -- we could not have done this, because their Technical expert and Technology specialist in hard of hearing and deafness technology was our consultant. Other computer services people helped us with some of the technical aspects. Then, once we found the funding to purchase the equipment and put the lines in place, they are also allowing their interpreters to, actually, function as the interpreters on call during business hours and for any person who comes into the Career Center who is deaf and needs interpreter but they come in and use the equipment, get on line and have that immediate access to that qualified interpreter personnel. The communication between the Career Center staff and then customer who is deaf is immediate and very effective. The person is not writing notes or having to send the person home to wait for the interpreter to be available. It is on-demand and the process of putting that in pays.

We also have a universal accessible workstation, amplified phones and for people with cognitive and learning disabilities, we have a number of software packages. And for physical disabilities, we have adjustable computer trays, movable mounting arms and the keyboards, adapted keyboards and many keyboards, things like that. We put a lot of things in place in our workstation to help any person with a disability, with pretty much any disability, to come and be able to get on-line and access the services, the training services or the JobLink services and get the same information that a person without a disability would get. This has been a real benefit to people with disabilities.

Then, with that collaboration with VR, again, we have developed a Software Guide for all of the software on that workstation. VR was very instrumental in working with us and

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developing this guide. We have Quick Sheets that give a quick overview or an in-depth overview. VR is also assisting us with ongoing technical assistance with monitoring the software. When we put the software in place we bought all of the upgrades that we could. They are making sure that everything is upgraded, working and functioning well in collaboration with the Career Center staff. So, that is what we are doing as far as programmatic and physical accessibility.

Then, we have also put in place an online web course which is at our website. That is www.rehab.state.al.us/maps We put a number of things on there. One is the on-line web course. We used both national and local VR experts and state VR experts to help us develop 14 computer-based models that take you everywhere from disability etiquette, ADA, disclosure of disability, emergency preparedness, state of technology, and specific disabilities like traumatic brain injury, vision and blindness, hearing loss and so forth, also, hidden disabilities. That course is both a Power Point with video clips. We also went around and videotaped customers that were a part of that development, consumers with disabilities as well as employers that have hired people who have disabilities. We have video clips of them talking about the challenges and their successes and what concerns they had when they were first considering hiring a person with a disability. We have done lot of things in those learning modules and are very much multimedia type of program and are for people with all learning styles. We have a post- test and people get a certificate upon completion. We are able to track who goes through the courses.

The website also has supportive documents like fact sheets on all of the disabilities that we present, several of them are in Spanish until we ran out of money. There are a number of booklets. We have a disability etiquette workbook that has our own Alabama resources and things like that, supporting documents for the learning modules. Then, we have taken these modules and Career Center staff are both doing this individually and going on the Web course, if that works best for them. We are also pulling out from our library, we have an AT library that takes all of the pieces of those modules and

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pieces of the website. You can customize presentations to use for on-site presentations and PowerPoints and put that video clips and things like that.

It is helping. We are working with Career Center staff and, basically, doing what works for them in their particular location and giving that training to them and helping them to see that disability is just a natural part of the human experience. They have come a very long way putting the video interpreting system that place. We have a lot of focus on deaf culture and using an interpreter. It is amazing. They have learned a little sign language. Customers that are deaf are not afraid of them anymore. It has been fun to see the changes.

We also have an employer video that we pulled from all of these video clips that we did around the state with all of the different disabilities to put into an employer video to show employers and help them overcome any concerns they have about employing a person has a disability. Some other features on that one site are See Service Resources. It is a place where people, customers or individuals serving customers, can go and search for services by location, either county or city and then by services offered. They can search by disability, organization or any combination of that to locate what services they need based on what their individual, unique needs are.

Also, on the website, we have a job link. We have developed Job Link video in both English and Spanish to help the customer navigate through the Alabama Job Link as they are searching for jobs at the Career Center. We also have that on CD and get it out to the school system. The school system has incorporated it into their transition courses.

We have six DPNs throughout the state and they are doing tremendous work and being very successful integrating the service of VR and complementing them. They integrated into the local employment teams with VR and community intake programs and the Career Center staff to work with employers. They collaborate with VR through interviews, with customers in complementing the services that VR is providing. We feel like we have a lot of the things in place structurally for sustainability and hope it will

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have some funding to help us with the money part of it. That is needed with everyone having so much limitation on their funding, too.

Bobby Silverstein: Karen, I thank you for that presentation. Again, people should know that the paper that accompanies the PowerPoint has hotlinks to all of the websites that Karen made reference to. I will ask you now, Darlo, if you can share your exciting new initiative and, Cindy, if you would present after that. We are going to hope to be finished by 12:10, or so. I will then quickly summarize some references to other states and then have 20 minutes for questions.

Georgia

Darlo Koldenhoven: All right, Bobby, thank you. This is Darlo Koldenhoven from the Georgia VR Program. I have my other assistant director, Susan Sherman, also with the VR program. What I will do today is give you a brief overview of our DOL, basically, do everything that you have been talking about, Bobby, as far as how VR should be integrated into the Workforce Investment Act. By process of reviewing our own situation, as far as how we were dealing with people with disabilities, how we were trying to take a look at people with disabilities that were coming into the Career Centers and those people coming into the Career Centers or accessing our Disability Program Navigators and our accessible workstations, but Labor was still not really becoming a part of the voc rehab program and they might not have been getting any kind of services that were benefiting them, trying to make sure that we were doing the right kind of things and trying to include a full continuum of individuals with disabilities receiving the services everywhere in the state. In other words if you happen to come into a Career Center that was co-located with the VR program, that could often get you a referral to the voc rehab if you would somehow disclose the you have a disability. What we are doing here in Georgia is trying to formalize and build an integration strategy to include the full range of folks with disabilities.

Susan Sherman: We are located within the Department of Labor in Georgia, here. We have an elected commissioner.

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Darlo Koldenhoven: Right. We have a lot of places where we are co-located within Career Centers and have a lot of locations that are separately located throughout the same towns but still working in cooperation with the Career Center, but not necessarily within the same building. What we noticed when we started doing some of our data review is we were having thousands of people, and I do mean thousands, there might have been 60,000 over the past five years of people whose Social Security numbers were matching up within the voc rehab system and the Department of Labor system that were not receiving services on a real regular basis from voc rehab and were somehow or another showing up at the Career Centers. We were missing a great opportunity to do what you talked about earlier, Bobby, about being the change agent. What we are trying to do is make sure we were improving services to all, and especially to individuals that would come into the Career Center and not disclose as far as having a disability. Now, when a person is working with a Career Center worker and disclose that they have a disability, that person will be offered the opportunity to be sent to the voc rehab program, but it is not an automatic referral. Were you aware of the vocational rehabilitation program? Oftentimes they will say that they have done voc rehab before and I do not have the time to go through intensive services or number lot of what we are seeing that today at the labor market. They are saying that is nice, but I need a job this week. I have kids that I need to feed and a house that I need to make sure I do not lose whatever it might be. Rather than taking the time to do some of the long, intensive services that we often have for vocational rehabilitation, we look at what we can do to help the individual who needs relatively quick, immediate but still voc rehab-type services but not go through a complete training program or intensive services. Part of the service integration strategy is a where the applicant is referred to voc rehab and gets a meeting with a voc rehab counselor immediately, maybe within the same week. At that time the person sits down and talks to them about what their disability might be and how we can start our application process and still realizing that we have the 60 day window order to make the eligibility determinations.

Susan Sherman: We have created, basically, a new front door that all applicants will go through. It is called OASIS—

Darlo Koldenhoven: This seminar is, basically, where we are doing some very initial assessments where we are doing some interest inventories. We are talking about the programs that a person would take, it would sometimes be some job readiness and training, also taking a look at helping an individual learn ways to retain a job. What will cause the person to come into the Career Center? How did they lose their employment? That they never been employed? That is bound to be a different tack.

Susan Sherman: The people that will be doing the OASIS, there will be one person that is a Career Center employee and one person who is a VR employee.

Darlo Koldenhoven: Facilitators will be 100% designated to this program where the outcome of the program is going to be a matter of helping them find out what their job interest, their job abilities and a certain amount of skills that they might have and then help them get into a job search program that is going to be very intensive, working not only with their abilities but also helping them understand how their disabilities fit into the world of work.

Susan Sherman: If the assessment shows they are not ready to go into job search, they go back to the counselor who then continues to implement the plan.

Darlo Koldenhoven: What we are looking at is not made quick turnaround time. We are talking about individuals coming into the Career Center, meeting up with the voc rehab that works there.

Susan Sherman: Or the VR office.

Darlo Koldenhoven: The VR office is the standard Route. This is like Susan said earlier, our new front door that we are offering to make sure that the Career Center staff gets support. In the past the traditional Career Center staff has not been comfortable about dealing with people with disabilities and like you said earlier, Bobby, there is an

automatic referral to vocational rehabilitation whether they need intensive difference services or not.

Susan Sherman: We did called the DPNs, the CWICs that our state purchased, some of our regional directors, and training staff, IT staff, finance, policy, everyone has been involved that the development of this program as well as the Career Center outside.

Darlo Koldenhoven: So, basically, what we have tried to do and another way of making this work for us is by bringing in the people from Finance, we have found ways that there are certain resources within the Department of Labor that are state dollars. By using dedicated persons to help run our identification service seminar at the very front and to help with the intensive job search, we are able to use of their state dollars and exploring ways that the state dollars can be used to match of federal dollars per vote so, we are seeming to have found a way that we are going to be able to increase our services on a statewide basis for individuals with disabilities and still keep our order of selection within the bounds that we have going at this moment and, hopefully, be able to increase our federal pull-down money. Again, we have more state match on a third kind of direct match that we can actually provide through our designated state agency, which is the Georgia Department of Labor. So, that is our kind of our goal, our goal on it is to do as a dual goal. One is to insure we are providing the services that the Workforce Investment System has available to it. The other thing is to take the finance end of it and find ways to enhance, ways to bring in other state dollars. In summary, we have been piloting this program and intend for it to go statewide in April. Thank you.

Bobby Silverstein: Thank you. Cindy?

Mississippi

Cindy Goodin: Yes. Good morning. In Mississippi, what we try to do, at the very beginning, we have been at the table from the very beginning. What we tried to do was sitting down and then decides which roles that VR should play at the State Board for system. What it boiled down is our agency is, basically, the expert on dealing with people with disabilities. That is our business. That is what we do and what we should be

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able to provide to the system. We'll try to focus on providing education and training within the system so that everyone within the system, all of the partners could understand and develop skills that working with people with disabilities. They could achieve the goals that they set for themselves. We have done that through all of the numerous projects that we have had with the system. The work force director, at the time that we started many of our Projects, had been involved with vocational rehabilitation in the states he was in and that, especially Texas when he was working with the Goodwill Industry. He knows what VR can bring to the table and was very good about providing WIA funds to us to work on different projects and what have you. That is where we started working on accessibility issues.

We believe it is important for all of the customers with disabilities that is how we refer to them in Mississippi, the need to be accessible to people with disabilities, not only physically but programmatic. We tried to put a focus on that. We provide training when we can, not only at the request of the part within the system, but as we see a need. If different situations happen within the WIN job centers and we think the staff needs training that is disability-related, we will provide that training. We get a lot of requests to provide training, too.

Bobby asked me to touch on the Access for All Manual. That is something that I came into contact with, that Manual, when we had the Navigator project here in Mississippi. We found it was a really good tool and would be beneficial for that Manual to be in the entire WIN job centers. We used funds from the Navigator project to put that Manual in the hands of people that needed to use it. It has been very successful. They used it to conduct staff training every week at the Centers. Another tool that has been really good for the Centers, to be honest with you, all of our partners, not only that the Center, but mental health, Medicaid, and everybody here that Mississippi has enjoyed the 10 Commandments of Dealing with People with Disabilities. That is a very good thing that has been helpful. We try to, like I said, we try to be at the table whenever possible to show ourselves as a viable partner within the system. We are very active at the annual

governor's workforce development work force and make sure that disability-related work jobs are at that conference and try to make sure that the One-Stop University that we have here in Mississippi includes disability-related topics for the curriculum that is here.

We try to go where our workforce partners go so that we can hear what they hear and understand what is being told to them about the work force system and how the work force system should be run at the State. We attended Southeastern Employment and Training association conferences that are held twice a year. That is where we get a lot of our information and does a lot of our networking; build a lot of our relationships. It has been helpful to be as involved as possible with our other work force partners. I will take any questions when we get to the Q&A period. That is it, basically, I just wanted to share that we had to decide what our role was and we determined it was education and training of the system.

Bobby Silverstein: Cindy, in addition to your materials that you shared with us that are in the paper, you also talk about selecting the most competent staff to place in the WIN job centers rather than at yours. Why is that?

Cindy Goodin: Well, if you do not mind, I have my supervisor in here, Bob McDonald. I picked up the phone so you could hear me better, but I will put him on, too, in the case he wants to interject something. Bob, they ask me why we selected the most competent staff to put at the WIN job centers instead of putting new hires in there.

Bob McDonald: The answer to that would be obvious: that we wanted our best foot forward as we work with our partners in the work force system to be able to provide training, to be able to respond to problematic situations, answer questions and to set a good example within the system.

Cindy Goodin: Bobby, I would like to interject, too, that one of the things we did, initially is we took part-time counselors in the One-Stops that would go one day a week. That was good at the very beginning when we started getting involved in this One-Stop arena. It became apparent that only spending one day or half a day a week in the Center, we were not as inclusive in the Center as we should be. We were treated,

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almost-I hate to say it, because it is not good term--as stepchildren, because we were not always there or considered as much a part of the team as all of the other partners that were there full-time. We made the decision a couple of years ago to not have part-time or co-located counselors. If we are going to have a staff person there they would be full time. That would be more effective.

Next, we are going to talk about the Disability Program Navigator Technical Assistance Project. I am going to give that over to Laura to describe the project and materials that are available.

Bobby Silverstein: Thank you. Again, and that is in the paper, there are two or three pages of comprehensive descriptions of what folks in Mississippi are doing. I am going to take a few minutes to summarize some of the initiatives in the other states and open it up for questions. We included in the paper some of what was happening in 10 or so other states, including some of the things that are proposed or that states are testing, for example in Arizona they have made a comprehensive website for accessibility. In One-Stops in California, they have 15 semester-hour certificate programs. In a number of states, there is a relationship with employers and the local or state Business Leadership Network. In a number of states they have developed a local Infrastructure Board where there are local resource teams and approaches. There is one state, New Mexico that has developed an interesting laptop loan program for those that do not otherwise have access to the Internet. At your leisure and you might want to look at what some of the states are doing outside, as well. Would like to open it for questions, Eve?

Q & A

Eve Hill: Operator, we are ready to open the line up for questions.

Operator: Ladies and gentlemen, if you do have some questions, please press the one key on your telephone. If you wish to remove yourself, please press the pound key.

Operator: Our first question comes from Birmingham, Alabama.

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Caller: I want to know how to access the PowerPoint by Southeast TACE on the ADA Amendment Act.

Operator: I will work through the TACE to get that to you.

Caller: Okay. Thank you.

Operator: Again, if you have questions, please press the one key at this time. Our next question comes from Cindy from Florida.

Cindy: Hello, everybody. How are you all doing?

Bobby Silverstein: Good.

Cindy: I was wondering if you require, are you aware of any of the states where the state for counselor or disability navigator to have a CRCC at all?

Bobby Silverstein: Laura, can you answer that?

Laura Gleneck: For the Disability Program Navigators, they are not required to have that. I am not certain about VR. DPNs are not required to have that.

Cindy: Thank you.

Operator: I am showing no further questions.

Bobby Silverstein: I do not know if this is physically possible, but if people from Tennessee are around, if they could describe the accessibility and accommodation surveys that they have done in One-Stops, that would be helpful. Is that possible?

Eve Hill: Presumably, if they press one, they can access the line.

Operator: Please present one if you have a comment to make.

Bobby Silverstein: Okay, if people from Tennessee are not there, I found it interesting in terms of their description that they have the Tennessee Division of Rehab Services; they have developed and conducted accessibility and accommodation surveys of most of their Career Centers. They are often called to actually provide the advice on how to provide the accommodations for folks with disabilities served by the One-Stops.

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Operator: I am showing now that you probably do have a question from Terry Smith of Chattanooga, Tennessee. Your line is open.

Terry: Sorry I did not punch in earlier. I am Director of Services for the Blind in Tennessee and our combined agency. We did put together a Team. I thought some of them were on the call and would punch in. We did have a team of 3 to 4 people that visited every one of the Career Centers. We have done that twice now, I think, to help each of the Centers to make their services accessible, provide them feedback on what they need to do next terms of accessibility issues and things like that. So, his explanation was exactly the way that we have done mats and do have. We are co-located that most of the Centers as well. We do have a close relationship with those people.

Bobby Silverstein: I have a question for Cindy, if nobody else does.

Operator: I am showing a question from Bob McDonald from Mississippi. Your line is open, Sir.

Operator: Sir, your line is open.

Bob McDonald: I am sorry. I had it on mute. This is a question for Karen Cardin from Alabama. She made reference to the fact that the guide was made a part of the state plan in Alabama. I am wondering if you have a combined state plan or are using a separate state plan. Could you address how you-what mechanism you use to get that plan incorporated into the WIA state plan?

Karen Cardin: Sorry, I had to un-mute. Can you all hear me?

Bobby Silverstein: Yes.

Karen Cardin: Yes, you were asking about incorporating the recommended policies and procedures into the state plan. Basically, our grant is through the Alabama at Department of Economic and Community Affairs. When we were developing the recommended policies and procedures, we collaborated with the DECA and Industrial Relations and through that effort, they were part of in the development of the

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recommended policies and procedures and presented it to the state workforce round table and some of the other groups that get together to oversee the state workforce plan proposal, an act that process, they felt that that was something that it would be an important piece to have as a part of their state plan that they adopted it that way.

Bobby Silverstein: This is Bobby. If either a provision similar to what was added to the previous House and Senate Bills that did not make it through for reauthorization, if the final speech to this Congress includes any of the kind of provisions that were in these previous Bills, there is another handle for requiring things in the state plan. For example, the Senate bill specifies 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, the conduct of assessment, Service delivery, and the development of adjustment to performance measures established and the training of staff. So, that kind of provision, which is likely to be included in and the bill reauthorize WIA would almost require the inclusion of those kinds of policies, practices and procedures.

Operator: I am showing no lineup for questions or comments.

Bobby Silverstein: Can I ask Cindy a question?

Cindy Goodin: Go ahead.

Bobby Silverstein: In your document that you sent to us, you described career readiness certificate. Then, you made a reference to a problem. When I was working on this area with the Institute for Community Inclusion a couple of years ago, this issue became a very critical issue. The issue is that you are using key trained pre-tests and some documents to try to certify that people, applicants or consumers, customers, in the One-Stop are job ready. You make the statement, which is what we found, that some of these questions might not be accommodating to people with disabilities. The department hopes to address the issues with accommodation by working with the parent company as well as the WIN system to ensure that people with disabilities benefit from this highly touted system of credentializing.

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Cindy Goodin: The site has been pushing the career readiness certificate. We have been working with the community colleges and what have you. This system has been installed in most of the WIN job centers, as far as I know. I have not been involved in career readiness certificates or had not really heard it until it was mentioned at one of the local work force investment board meetings. That is where Bob and I get all of our information. We make sure we attend all of the local board meetings. It was brought up there. The question came up, if this type of credential is it accommodating to people with disabilities? There was a workshop at our last governor workforce--Staff were given a presentation and a couple of our Workforce Regional Managers were in that workshop and they asked the question, of course, and there were consumers who are blind and were asking what kind of accommodations were made for consumers that are blind? Basically, they said readers (and Braille. A lot of our blind consumers do not use Braille. Anyway, we have been kicking that idea around. As a matter of fact, we wanted to put that in one of our proposals, to work on the career readiness certificate. We felt like, Bob and I had a discussion, and we just felt like if it needed to be addressed at the state level so that all of the areas would benefit from what we could do about this. But the parent company for this is ACT. We have contacted them and discussed what issues we have with the career readiness certificate and referred them to DBTAC, which is the one in Iowa. We have not gotten anywhere. I know that one of the local community colleges is going to help us address the issue.

Bobby Silverstein: It is a major issue for around the country. The certificates are being used by a lot of these One-Stops. If they have not been modified and adjusted to address the needs for people with disabilities that is another unintentional exclusionary strategy.

Cindy Goodin: It is very unintentional, but the thing is, we need to feel comfortable speaking of in local board meetings and other meetings that prepare for the system and say that we know it is not intentional, but do you realize that you are excluding people with disabilities with this test because it does not accommodate their needs.

Bobby Silverstein: Exactly part of that to me, and capitalizes the whole reason why VR is such a critical, integral component of this seamless system. VR is the one that has the experience, expertise, knowledge, and the understanding of how to address and meet the needs of people with disabilities. If they did not speak up, who will?

Cindy Goodin: Exactly.

Laura Gleneck: Bobby, this is Laura. Can I add to that?

Bobby Silverstein: Sure.

Laura Gleneck: Cindy, I am glad you brought this up for a good reason. This was very recent within the last couple of months, in our New Mexico project, which is run by VR at the state level, a huge industry, Hewlett-Packard is coming in and requiring applicants to use the worksheet system. So, of course, the DPN program is trying to ensure that as many individuals with disabilities can access it and came up with some of the same issues. Those that are blind, they accommodate, while they do offer reasonable accommodation, they are not, necessarily, the accommodations that someone who is blind might want to use. For instance, they do not allow them to use the computer system at all. We went around through the DPN network across the country asking if anyone knew about software that was compatible. We learned, basically, what you did. The DPN lead, again, who is with the Division of Vocational rehabilitation in New Mexico, is carrying on a similar conversation on that end of the country with ACT and KeyTrain to, hopefully, expand the compatibility issues so that all individuals will be able to benefit from it because it does seem to be a system that is used nationwide.

Cindy Goodin: Laura, after the call, if you still have your e-mail address, I my e-mail you and ask you the contact is.

Laura Gleneck: I would happy to connect to, Cindy.

Bobby Silverstein: Her e-mail is on the first page of the paper that accompanied the PowerPoint.

Laura Gleneck: I might have gotten married since the last time I talked.

Eve Hill: This is Eve Hill. I want to thank our speakers for all of the insight into the role that all of the VRs can play. I also wanted to thank the audience members for joining us today. Please visit the website, at tacesoutheast.org for the future activities coming up. They will be webinars which is a more interactive way to participate than the training. A written transcript of the session will be posted to the TACE website as well as a digital recording. It will be archived with all of the materials on the TACE website. Please complete your evaluation for today at the end of the session. Your feedback is important so that we can meet your specific needs and continue to make the format and information we provide very responsive. You can also refer to the site coordinator and participant instructions that you downloaded prior to the session for how to do the evaluation. This session has been approved for CEU and CRCC credits. Please refer to your instructions on how to claim those credits. Remember if your questions were not answered today; please contact the Southeast TACE at 866-518-7750. If you have any technical assistance needs coming up, please feel free to give us a call or e-mail and we will help define the information you need. Thank you, you all.

Operator: Ladies and gentlemen, this does conclude today's conference. Thank you for your participation and have a Good Day. You can disconnect now.

[Event concluded].