

Disability Employment Initiative

Department of Labor

FACT SHEET
October 2011



To improve coordination and collaboration among employment and training and asset development programs implemented at state and local levels, including the Ticket to Work Program, and build effective community partnerships that leverage public and private resources to better serve individuals with disabilities and improve employment outcomes.

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) has awarded over \$43 million to sixteen states under the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) to improve education, training, and employment opportunities and outcomes of youth and adults who are unemployed, underemployed, and/or receiving Social Security disability benefits. The DEI is jointly funded and administered by U.S. DOL's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) and the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP).

DEI Projects build upon the Disability Program Navigator initiative by hiring staff with expertise in disability and workforce development to serve as Disability Resource Coordinators (DRCs). DEI Projects will also support extensive partnerships, collaboration and service coordination across multiple workforce, generic, and disability systems in each state. These involve state vocational rehabilitation agencies, mental health and developmental disability agencies, Medicaid Infrastructure Grant-supported activities, independent living centers, business leadership networks, and other community-based and nonprofit organizations.

Overview

- DOL has entered into three-year cooperative agreements with sixteen states to implement strategic approaches for exemplary employment services to individuals with disabilities in the public workforce system: Funded in 2010--Alaska, Arkansas, Delaware, Illinois, Kansas, Maine, New Jersey, New York and Virginia and Funded in 2011--California, Hawaii, Ohio, South Dakota, Tennessee, Washington and Wisconsin.
- DEI Projects focus on either adults or youth in order to develop and refine replicable models.
- DRCs are hired at the local workforce investment area level to implement the DEI strategic approach.
- Expanding the workforce investment system's capacity to serve as Employment Networks for beneficiaries under the Social Security Administration's Ticket to Work program.
- An independent evaluation will be conducted using quantitative and qualitative data from grantees.

Strategic Service Delivery

DEI Projects are implementing two or more strategic components as critical elements of their service delivery approach to serve the youth or adult population:

- **Integrated Resource Teams** coordinate services and leverage funding to meet the needs of a job seeker with a disability.
- **Blending and Braiding Funds / Leveraging Resources** from multiple sources to contribute to education, training and/or employment goals.
- **Customized Employment** individualizes the relationship between job seekers and businesses to meet the needs of both.
- **Self-Employment** is an employment alternative for individuals seeking flexibility in a new or better career.
- **Guideposts for Success** are key educational and career development interventions for all youth, including youth with disabilities.
- **Asset Development Strategies** represent various approaches to enhance long-term economic self-sufficiency.
- **Partnerships and Collaboration** impact the ability of adults and youth with disabilities to participate in education, training and employment opportunities.

For additional information contact the National DEI Program Office at (202) 693-2723 (https://disability.workforce3one.org/page/tag/dei_project) and the DEI Technical Assistance Project website at <http://dei-ideas.org/>