

One-Stop Systems - Connecting with Disability Resources

While customers with disabilities should have full access and use of the complete range of One-Stop resources and services available to all customers, there are times when resources and expertise may be necessary that are specifically related to the individual's disability. The public Vocational Rehabilitation system (VR) is the only disability specific agency that is a mandated partner in the One-Stop system. State and local systems may have additional public and private disability agencies as partners. When One-Stop staff have questions, public VR and other partners with disability expertise can be an excellent resource. In addition, every state and local area has a multitude of local resources that can assist local One-Stop systems to meet the needs of people with disabilities. There are also a variety of national information resources which can be of assistance.

By taking advantage of available local and national resources, One-Stop systems can play a significant role in meeting their community's needs not only for quality employment and training services, but also as an information conduit, resource, and referral point. The variety of available disability resources can assist One-Stop systems in a variety of ways:

- for answering questions that One-Stop staff may have concerning service delivery for customers with disabilities (such as advice on meeting the needs of a customer who is deaf)
- for specialized assistance and resources to enable the One-Stop system to meet the specific needs of customers with disabilities (such as expertise and resources related to job accommodations)
- as a resource for services beyond (but not in place of) what the One-Stop system can typically provide (such as specialized transportation, ongoing assistance with benefits management, or intensive post-placement job site support)
- as a resource to customers for information and resources beyond what the One-Stop Center itself is able to provide.

Examples of the disability resources, beyond public VR, that may be available to assist One-Stop systems in meeting the needs of people with disabilities:

- Non-partner public disability agencies (such as Departments of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities)
- Resources from the Social Security Administration (over 8 million nationally receive cash benefits from Social Security on a monthly basis due to disability)
- Community rehabilitation providers (agencies which provide intensive job placement and support services for people with disabilities)
- Independent Living Centers (organizations run by and for people with disabilities which provide a variety of services)

- Protection and Advocacy Organizations (organizations in each state which protect the rights of people with disabilities, and can provide assistance with ADA issues)
- Advocacy organizations for specific disabilities (there are many different national organizations dedicated to specific disabilities, most of which have state and local chapters, which have a variety of expertise and resources available)
- Assistive technology projects (each state has an organization which is dedicated to meeting the assistive technology needs of people with disabilities).

These are just examples, and there are many others as well. Section 14, at the end of this manual, contains a comprehensive listing of disability resources. Many of the national resources listed have state and local contacts. Additionally, throughout this manual are listed a variety of resources pertaining to the topic being discussed. Additionally, Section 11 contains information on the disability service system, which can assist One-Stop systems in understanding how services for people with disabilities are organized, and what types of resources may be locally available.

How to Connect

The following are some ideas on how One-Stop systems can connect with and utilize the variety of available disability resources.

- Dedicate a portion of your One-Stop web site to links for local and national disability resources. This can be useful both for customers and staff.
- Have literature and information from local organizations available in your resource library
- Hold an open house for local disability organizations at the One-Stop Center, so they have an opportunity to learn about the One-Stop system
- Meet individually and as a group with local disability organizations to learn how these organizations can assist the One-Stop system to meet the needs of customers with disabilities, and also how the One-Stop system can assist these organizations in meeting their needs
- Consider having an advisory group, made up of representatives of various disability organizations, which meets on a regular basis to discuss the role of the One-Stop system in meeting the needs of people with disabilities
- Have staff from local disability organizations conduct presentations and workshops at the One-Stop Center, possibly together with One-Stop staff. For example, in the Boston area, disability organizations have provided presentations at One-Stop Centers on Social Security Disability Benefits, and Using Personal Networks.
- Have staff from local disability organizations available on-site at the One-Stop Center at specific times to work with customers (for example, a representative from the local Social Security office)
- Be flexible about staff from local disability organizations and agencies using the resources of the One-Stop Center to meet the needs of the individuals served by the organization.

These are just examples, and there are likely many other ways that One-Stop systems can work together with disability organizations to each other's mutual benefit. The important thing for One-Stop systems to recognize is that working collaboratively with the various disability resources will not create more work for One-Stop staff, but instead will allow the One-Stop system to meet the needs of customers with disabilities in a much more comprehensive and quality way.