

Promising Practices...

Achieving a more welcoming, integrated and accessible One-Stop Career Center system

"July 26 marks the 19th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)...the ADA's provisions include the right to seek, obtain, pursue and maintain employment without being hampered by physical or attitudinal barriers. I believe that having a job is a civil right. Those who are qualified for and want to work should not be denied that right because of an inaccessible building or an outdated set of assumptions about what they can or cannot do. Unfortunately, the employment rate for people with disabilities in this country is unacceptably low: 22.6% of individuals with disabilities in our country are participating in the labor force, compared to 71.9% of persons with no disability."

Statement by Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis - July 24, 2009

Disability Program Navigators (DPNs) across the nation create valuable support strategies for job seekers with disabilities, both within and outside of the public workforce system. The Promising Practices series provides insight into these strategies, as well as methods for you to foster more successful partnerships and to assist more people with disabilities achieve positive employment outcomes.

Opening All the Doors to the One-Stop Career Center System

With the passage of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) in 1998 came a powerful message that the training and employment needs of varied job seekers and employers would be met within a single, universal One-Stop Career Center system. Employment resources and services would be available to job seekers of all ages with diverse racial, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds, and a wide range of education and work experiences. Programs and activities would be integrated and universally accessible to all incoming job seekers, including job seekers with disabilities and/or other challenges to employment.

As one of the key principles of WIA, universal access offered the promise of a welcoming, integrated, and user-friendly system. Job seekers would be able to independently tap into all available employment services, resulting in fewer requests for specialized assistance and more efficient use of staff resources. Under WIA and the Americans with Disabilities Act, reasonable accommodations would be provided upon request; however, One-Stop Career Centers would streamline services so that a wide-ranging population of job seekers, including job seekers with disabilities, would have direct access to their resources, programs and activities.

Although WIA's mandate of universal access should have *opened the doors* to job seekers with disabilities, achieving it in One-Stop Career Centers has been challenging. Under WIA, states and local regions have flexibility in the design of their One-Stop Career Centers, and as a result, universal access has been interpreted differently. While being able to get in the door and access resources is the first step to ensuring equal opportunity, building the capacity to serve and accommodate a diverse population of job seekers is integral to achieving true universal access.

Contact Us

For a list of DPN contacts by state/territory, visit www.doleta.gov/disability
For more information, including tools and resources, visit dpnavigators.net

Then...and Now:

The Progression of Universal Access in One-Stop Career Centers

With the addition of Disability Program Navigators (DPNs) in One-Stop Career Centers across the nation, universal access moved into the spotlight. Though efforts had been made to provide equal access of services and activities under WIA, many One-Stop Career Centers had narrowly defined this, especially as it pertained to job seekers with disabilities. One underlying approach used to broaden universal access by DPNs nationwide was outreach. By reaching out to local disability communities and other community-based providers, DPNs learned how the public workforce system could better meet the employment needs of job seekers with disabilities and/or other employment challenges. Due to these efforts, partnerships were formed and strengthened with a multitude of service systems. One-Stop Career Centers gained a greater awareness that universal access is not achieved simply by modifying buildings or mandating staff training, but through strong alliances with a diversity of service systems and a shared commitment to frequent problem-solving.

With more substantial collaboration among mandated and non-mandated partners, One-Stop Career Centers shifted their focus from job seekers *getting in the door* to job seekers being able to fully participate on all levels of the WIA system. By concentrating on program access, including the availability of adaptive technology and services/devices needed for communication access, One-Stop Career Centers are progressing into more welcoming, integrated and universally accessible systems for job seekers with different skills, abilities, disabilities and employment challenges. Below are examples of how DPNs throughout the country are helping to expand universal access in One-Stop Career Centers for a more diverse population of job seekers.

THEN...One-Stop Career Centers tended to focus solely on physical accessibility, such as the installation of ramps, elevators, accessible bathrooms, and electric door openers.

NOW...One-Stop Career Centers consider the accessibility of all job search resources, programs and activities, as well as the design of buildings inside and out.

Examples of Expanded Universal Access

- Front desks are partially lowered, so job seekers with a lower line of sight are welcomed eye-to-eye.
- Signs with pictures/symbols are displayed to direct job seekers to computers, telephones, faxes, etc.
- Up-to-date adaptive technology is included with a list of other services/resources (i.e., materials in foreign languages) available for *all* job seekers.
- Accessible workshops, on-site recruitments, and job fairs are marketed to job seekers with disabilities.

THEN...One-Stop Career Centers immediately referred job seekers with disabilities to Vocational Rehabilitation (VR).

NOW...One-Stop Career Centers offer the same level of information, services, and access to *all* job seekers, including job seekers with disabilities.

Examples of Expanded Universal Access

- One-Stop Career Center staff members and partners participate in awareness training to learn how to more effectively serve a diverse population of job seekers, including jobs seekers with disabilities.
- One-Stop Career Center staff members and partners are familiar with a wide range of community resources and collaborate with service providers to reach common employment goals of job seekers.
- One-Stop Career Center staff members and partners often work together with VR to serve job seekers with disabilities, using an integrated service approach with cost and resource sharing.

THEN...One-Stop Career Centers were not familiar with how to accommodate job seekers with non-visible disabilities.

NOW...One-Stop Career Centers know how to accommodate job seekers with cognitive, mental health, learning and other non-visible disabilities.

Examples of Expanded Universal Access

- One-Stop Career Center staff members and partners regularly provide accommodations to job seekers with non-visible disabilities, including:
 - Assistance with completing job applications and resumes.
 - Using speech recognition software that recognizes the user's voice and changes it to text on computer screen; and screen reading software that reads aloud text from computer screen.
 - Allowing workshops and meetings to be recorded.
 - Providing written minutes of meetings and written checklists for job seekers.
 - Providing partitions or closed doors to allow for privacy.
 - Working together with job seekers *and* their Job Coaches towards employment goals.

THEN...One-Stop Career Centers advertise that they "Provide Auxiliary Aids Upon Request", but are not aware of all services/devices this implies.

NOW...One-Stop Career Centers provide an array of auxiliary aids to job seekers with disabilities to ensure full communication access.

Examples of Expanded Universal Access

- Awareness training is provided to One-Stop Career Center staff members and partners on working with job seekers who are deaf, hard-of-hearing or who have speech disabilities, including how to use telecommunication devices (TTY/TDD), Video Relay services and assisting listening systems.
- One-Stop Career Centers hire certified Sign Language Interpreters for job seekers who are deaf or hard-of-hearing.
- Videos used in One-Stop Career Center workshops are closed-captioned.

Spotlight: Maryland Makes Universal Access a Priority

Leading the country with their commitment to expanding universal access and achieving equal opportunity of services to *all* job seekers, including job seekers with disabilities, is the Maryland Workforce Investment System. As one of the first states to implement the DPN Initiative, efforts were underway to build the capacity of One-Stop Career Centers to serve and accommodate job seekers with disabilities. When the Governor's Workforce Investment Board adopted a resolution calling for universal design in all One-Stop Career Centers, a statewide commitment ensued. The resolution, calling for inclusive access to services that benefits a wide range of learning styles, languages, educational levels, and abilities, was a natural progression to the DPN Initiative.

With leadership from the Maryland Department of Labor Licensing and Regulation and close working relationship with the Maryland Department of Disabilities, DPNs worked to analyze the accessibility of all programs and services in the One-Stop Career Centers. The DPNs provided critical support in redesigning operational procedures, developing accommodation procedures and adding assistive technology to ensure the same level of opportunity to all job seekers. In addition, intensive awareness training was coordinated to increase the knowledge and comfort of One-Stop Career Center staff and partners in serving job seekers with different backgrounds, including job seekers with disabilities. As the One-Stop Career Centers in Maryland became more user-friendly and welcoming, the DPNs reached out to the community to promote collaboration, create partnerships and above all, market a universally accessible system to a diverse population of job seekers.

Maryland One-Stop Career Centers: Then....And Now

Below are several examples of how the Maryland One-Stop Career Centers have expanded universal access.

THEN...One-Stop Career Center staff members were unsure of how to interact and accommodate job seekers with different types of disabilities.

NOW...By working closely with the DPN, staff members and partners are more confident interacting with job seekers with disabilities.

Examples of Expanded Universal Access

- DPNs are considered valued members of the workforce team and are familiar with all services offered.
- DPNs are non-judgmental in answering inquiries about disability, responsive to concerns expressed by staff members and partners and supportive in problem-solving any challenges that arise.
- DPNs consistently follow-up with staff members and partners on disability-related inquiries or issues through awareness training, emails, newsletter articles and reliable resources.

THEN...One-Stop Career Center staff members often referred job seekers with disabilities to VR to address employment challenges.

NOW...Staff members and partners collaborate with other service providers to reach common employment goals of job seekers with disabilities.

Examples of Expanded Universal Access

- DPNs invite community-based providers to One-Stop Career Centers for monthly partner meetings.
- DPNs work to improve cross-agency collaboration by: hosting tours/orientations of One-Stop Career Centers, producing newsletters, coordinating job developer groups, sharing community resources with staff, offering on-site resources to partners such as computer training facilities, and inviting partners to provide mental health/crisis intervention services on-site to job seekers at One-Stop Career Centers.
- DPNs help coordinate Integrated Resource Teams (IRTs) for job seekers who need access to multiple service providers and resources in order to reach all training and employment goals.

THEN...One-Stop Career Center staff members were unsure of how to respond to employer inquiries about applicants or employees with disabilities.

NOW...Business Service staff members and partners are familiar with the resources and benefits of hiring a diverse population of job seekers, including job seekers with disabilities.

Examples of Expanded Universal Access

- DPNs offer job development training to staff members and partners on marketing a diverse population of job seekers, including the benefits of hiring job seekers with disabilities.
- DPNs plan “Lunch and Learn” events for area businesses on working with One-Stop Career Centers and include information on hiring a diverse population of job seekers.
- Staff members and partners learn reliable local, state and national resources that can help answer employer inquiries surrounding disability (i.e., reasonable accommodations, ADA, supports, etc).
- DPNs identify frequently used and/or requested community resources as non-mandated partners of the One-Stop Career Centers (i.e. benefits counseling, conflict resolution services, staffing agencies, mental health and crisis intervention services, English as a second language training, housing, etc).

Lessons Learned: Universal Accessibility in One-Stop Career Centers

DPNs and/or One-Stop Career Centers can:

- Gain support and commitment **at all levels** in the public workforce system to broaden perspective of universal accessibility in creating a more welcoming, integrated, and user-friendly system for all job seekers, including job seekers with disabilities.
- Expand awareness by sharing success stories of job seekers with many different abilities, education levels, and backgrounds realizing their training and career goals through the WIA system.
- Identify a partner(s) in the disability community who will engage in ongoing collaboration to support efforts towards expanding universal access. Examples of a disability partner(s) may be a DPN, a VR Counselor or a representative from another state/local disability or community-based organization.
- Assist partner(s) to learn more about the goals of WIA and to become familiar with all of the various programs, activities and resources available in One-Stop Career Centers.
- Invite disability and community-based providers into One-Stop Career Centers to demonstrate how to access self-help services and resources. Offer follow-up sessions for providers to return with job seekers and work as a team with One-Stop Career Center staff members to model interactions with job seekers.
- Collaborate with disability and community-based partners to plan relevant training for One-Stop Career Centers on critical disability-employment topics (i.e., interacting with job seekers with disabilities, disclosure issues, social security disability work incentives, the ADA, employer resources on hiring job seekers with disabilities, reasonable accommodations, and other valuable community resources).
- Coordinate cross training between One-Stop Career Centers and various community-based organizations to facilitate the exchange of up-to-date information on available services, supports and resources.
- Encourage One-Stop Career Center staff members and partners to reference valuable and reliable national, state and local resources which can broaden perspectives on universal access.
(See Universal Access Resources in the RESOURCES section, page 8.)

Spotlight: California and New York DPNs Partner to Promote Awareness

The Challenge: One-Stop Career Center staff members can feel overloaded with training and information while serving a diverse and demanding population of job seekers and employers

From the beginning of the DPN Initiative, it was evident that awareness training would be fundamental to improving program access to job seekers with disabilities in the public workforce system. All across the country, from California to New York, DPNs set out to coordinate awareness activities to help One-Stop Career Center staff members and partners feel more comfortable working with job seekers with disabilities, address attitudinal barriers, and offer resources. Yet, after experiencing the daily demands and time constraints within the WIA system, DPNs also realized the challenges involved with passing on such important information.

With high unemployment in many regions around the country, there is a sense of urgency in the public workforce system to meet the immediate needs of its customers. In addition to helping job seekers secure employment and satisfying the demands of employers, One-Stop Career Center staff members participate in frequent training. While there is an appreciation for training that is both required and useful, staff members can feel overloaded with information, especially in areas of inexperience or uncertainty. They may also be unreceptive to training approaches that seem overbearing, irrelevant, and/or unfamiliar with the One-Stop Career Center system.

The Solution: Circulate short and fun “30-Second Trainings” via e-mail to increase One-Stop Career Center staff members’ knowledge on disability and employment issues

Taking into consideration both the call to expand staff members’ knowledge on disability and the limited time available for training, DPNs in California devised a strategy. They created short, simple multiple choice questions on varied disability topics and circulated the mini trainings via e-mail. When a DPN in New York learned of the approach, they partnered to expand upon it. With feedback from One-Stop Career Centers and local disability communities in California and New York, the DPNs worked together to build on the innovative “30-Second Trainings”.

Topics of the 30-Second Trainings ranged from coverage of the WIA Section 188 Disability Checklist and the Americans with Disabilities Act, to a wide variety of accommodation ideas for job seekers with physical, visual, hearing, mental health, cognitive and other disabilities. Reliable resources were added to each training topic. The series of 30-Second Trainings was then used in a variety of ways: as an introduction or pre-test to a more in-depth training activity, as an e-mail reminder prior to a disability event, or as a post-test after an awareness activity to reinforce the information and resources presented.

“I believe the 30-Second DPN Trainings are a fun, novel and effective method for learning about disabilities. We have received positive feedback about them and have both customers and staff looking forward to receiving their monthly e-mail. This is a perfect blend of technology and a personal touch for learning about what can sometimes be a sensitive topic.”

-- Diane Bradac
Manager, Tompkins Workforce, NY

“I think the 30-Second Trainings are one of the best ideas I have seen. They are quick, fun and informative. I am able to learn valuable information in the amount of time it takes to open an e-mail. It gives me the freedom to train at my convenience. I am able to retain the information because of the simple, interactive format and because I am not being bombarded with too much information at one time.”

-- Carolyn Henderson
Sutter County Employment Service, CA

The Outcome: One-Stop Career Center staff members, employers, and community-based providers all across the country learn important, relevant disability-employment information

As the series of 30-Second Trainings evolved, DPNs in other states learned of the approach and began disseminating the email trainings in their own regions. Response from One-Stop Career Centers across the country was positive overall, with comments that the trainings were “fun”, “relevant” and “informative”. Circulation of the mini trainings extended to employers and business sector, as well as to disability and community-based providers. Again, DPNs reported a favorable response, sharing that recipients of the 30-Second Trainings frequently referenced back to the information and resources. Various training topics served as talking points in One-Stop Career Center staff meetings and during DPNs’ outreach activities. Most notably, numerous One-Stop Career Centers and partners, community-based providers, and employers were connecting back to DPNs after receiving the trainings with questions and requests for additional information and resources.

As recognition of an effective awareness strategy, the National DPN technical assistance and training provider helped to expand and incorporate the 30-Second Trainings into the menu of options for DPNs to use with staff members, partners, and employers in their local public workforce areas to promote and increase awareness on a variety of disability-related topics. Currently, the series of 30-Second Trainings covers a wide range of topics and is distributed nationally to thousands of representatives of the public workforce system, business sector, and service provider community.

“The 30-Second Training is an ingenious method of reaching people in the 21st century. In an era of burgeoning electronic and information technology, the 30-Second Training is an eye-catching, accurate and informative method of reaching people who serve and work with persons with disabilities. As a professional in the field of education and disability, I am thankful that these trainings “get the word out” in a concise and creative manner.”

- Jan Ponticelli, Ph.D., Director Disabled Students Programs & Services\CalWORKS, CA

Lessons Learned: Disability Awareness in One-Stop Career Centers

DPNs and/or One-Stop Career Centers:

- Prior to coordinating disability awareness training, consider how information is best passed on to staff members and partners, how receptive staff members and partners are to the information and presenter(s), and how information is applied by staff members and partners.
- Use *effective* training approaches, like the 30-Second Training series that respond to and build upon staff members’ and partners’ interests while remaining relevant to the goals of the WIA system.
- Allow disability partner(s) to work side-by-side with One-Stop Career Center staff members to learn more about WIA programs, services and partners, and directly hear questions surrounding disability.
- Reach out to the disability community to learn their experiences with the public workforce system and use this information to help guide awareness activities.
- Provide orientations to disability and community-based providers that point out the valuable benefits of the One-Stop Career Center system, especially to job seekers with disabilities, including:
 - The highly self-service, independent structure of WIA programs and activities can encourage job seekers to explore whether or not to disclose and how/when to request reasonable accommodations.
 - Making decisions about disclosure and requesting accommodations while accessing services in a One-Stop Career Center may help job seekers with these decisions later on during interviews, negotiations with employers, and on-a-job.

Resources

DPN Resources

- o www.doleta.gov/disability
- o www.dpnavigator.net

Disability & Employment Resources

- o <http://disability.workforce3one.org/>

Universal Access Resources

- o WIA Section 188 Disability Checklist Appendix with Examples of Practices - <http://www.dol.gov/oasam/programs/crc/section188.htm#appendix>
Examples of policies, procedures and other recommended steps that LWIA recipients can take to ensure that people with disabilities have equal access to WIA Title I programs and activities.
- o Job Accommodation Network (JAN) - <http://www.jan.wvu.edu/>
Free information on job accommodations, self-employment and small business opportunities, plus information on the ADA.
- o WIA Web course: "At Your Service: Welcoming Customers with Disabilities" - <http://www.wiawebcourse.org/>
A free, accessible, self-paced web course for learning best practices for working with job seekers with disabilities.
- o The Disability and Business Technical Assistance Center (DBTAC) - <http://www.adata.org/index.html>
National network of regional centers that provide up-to-date information, referrals, resources, and training on the ADA to businesses, employers, government entities, and individuals with disabilities.
- o Adaptive Environments Center, Inc. <http://www.adaptenv.org>
Promotes accessibility as well as universal design through education programs, technical assistance, training, consulting, publications, and design advocacy.

- o Assistive Technology Resources <http://www.assistivetech.net>
Online database of assistive technology designed to help target solutions, determine costs, and link to vendors that sell products.
- o National Center for Accessible Media <http://ncam.wgbh.org>
A resource for making media and information technology, including a captioning, accessible for people with disabilities.

30-Second Training Resources

- o http://www.dpnavigator.net/pages/30_second.html

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