LEAD Center Hosts Louisville Economic Advancement Assembly

The LEAD Center, in collaboration with Louisville Metro Government Community Services and Revitalization Department and Bank on Louisville, hosted an Economic Advancement Assembly in Louisville, Kentucky, on May 13, 2014. Bringing together individuals and service providers in the disability, employment, financial services, workforce and asset development communities, the Assembly focused on identifying ways to collaborate on a plan of action to build a brighter economic future for people with disabilities in the Louisville area.

LEAD Center policy team lead and National Disability Institute Executive Director Michael Morris spoke about the economic and financial difficulties faced by many in the disability community and identified improvement strategies. Desmond Brown, Program Specialist for the Office of Financial Empowerment at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), discussed CFPB’s work and commitment to improving the financial health of people living with disabilities.

Special guest, Congressman John Yarmuth (D-Ky.), spoke to attendees about federal disability policy and his support of the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act (H.R. 647/S. 313), a
piece of legislation that would allow families to set funds aside in a tax-advantaged savings account to be used to cover the costs of health care, employment support, housing, transportation, the purchase of technology and lifelong education.

Representing Louisville Metro Government was Sadiqa Reynolds, Chief Community Builder, and Tina Lentz, Executive Administrator for Louisville Metro Government Community Services and Revitalization/Program Administrator for Bank on Louisville. Reynolds opened the day’s program and challenged participants to work together to build a more inclusive Louisville. Lentz spoke about Louisville Metro Government’s work to build a community services network that meets the needs of residents living with disabilities and encourages them to live more financially independent lives.

Louisville Metro Government was identified by the LEAD Center as a key partner in the effort to improve employment and economic advancement opportunities for all people with disabilities. They were selected as a partner because of their commitment to improving the financial stability of Louisville residents as well as their inclusive approach to meeting the unique needs of low-income residents with and without disabilities.

In addition to federal and city representatives, attendees heard from three local partners working to improve the financial well-being of people with disabilities. Dr. David Beach, Executive Director of the Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, highlighted his agency’s work to assist Kentuckians with disabilities attain independence and competitive, high-quality employment. John Nevitt, Senior Manager of Family Stability for Metro United Way, discussed United Way’s rich tradition of supporting people in the community and helping every individual, with and without disabilities, achieve their fullest potential through education and financial stability initiatives. Finally, Larry Hensley, Community Work Incentives Coordinator of the Center for Accessible Living, emphasized the Center’s ongoing efforts to empower all people to reach for and achieve their dreams, live independently and be positive contributors to their community and society as a whole.

At the conclusion of the Economic Advancement Assembly, event participants formed working groups to identify existing local and state partners, opportunities for cross-collaboration and avenues to improve the current support infrastructure and service delivery model as it relates to financial empowerment for the disability community.

Policy Roundtable Update: LEAD Center Presents to Federal Officials at the U.S. Department of Labor

In July 2013, the LEAD Center, in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), convened a Policy Roundtable to focus on the challenges and opportunities of leveraging resources across public systems to improve integrated employment outcomes for people with disabilities. The Roundtable, conducted on July 17th and
18th in Washington, DC, brought together stakeholders from the federal, state, and local level to assess the blending and/or braiding of resources to improve integrated employment outcomes. Recommendations were proposed by the group to help overcome barriers to blending and/or braiding resources, increase cross system coordination of resources, and focus on professional development and capacity building.

As part of promoting the implementation of those recommendations, on May 19th, 2014, LEAD Center staff were invited to present and provide recommendations for next steps to a group of federal agencies that meet informally to discuss opportunities to collaborate on policy and practice initiatives to improve the employment of persons with disabilities. Michael Morris, the Policy Team Co-Chair for the LEAD Center, presented a descriptive landscape of current opportunities and challenges that states and localities face in trying to leverage resources across systems to improve employment outcomes of common customers with disabilities. Morris noted that multiple federal agencies have demonstrated some progress in working together across systems, including Education, Labor, Health and Human Services, Justice, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Transportation, Housing, and Social Security Administration to encourage improved cross system collaboration at the state and community level. “These are extraordinary times for federal system change investments,” said Morris. “The time is right for collective impact supporting braided resource strategies to advance employment outcomes for people with disabilities.”

Serena Lowe, Senior Policy Adviser at ODEP, followed Morris to discuss the opportunity to establish a consistent national message from federally funded systems regarding the braiding of resources to improve transition, employment, and socioeconomic outcomes for common customers with disabilities. The group of participating Federal agencies verbally agreed to work together on new cross agency policy initiatives to clarify how states and localities can braid resources and blend service delivery strategies across systems to support improved outcomes of common customers.

Prior to this meeting, LEAD Center and ODEP staff engaged federal agency representatives across systems to gain further understanding of the state of and support for a braided resource strategy to improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities. LEAD Center staff, together with ODEP, reviewed federal statutes and rules that require and/or encourage cross-system collaboration for youth in transition and working age adults with disabilities. Memoranda of Understanding between federal agencies and between state agencies also were reviewed to identify promising practices and support for braiding resources.

For more information about blending and braiding of resources, visit [http://www.leadcenter.org/policy/annual-policy-roundtable-2013](http://www.leadcenter.org/policy/annual-policy-roundtable-2013) and look for updates on the LEAD Center website and in future e-newsletters.
Upcoming Webinar from ODEP and LEAD Center to Celebrate the Olmstead Anniversary

One of the most historic legal decisions affecting the civil rights of people with disabilities celebrated its 15th anniversary on June 22nd. In 1999, the U.S. Supreme Court rendered the landmark decision in the *Olmstead v. L.C.* case, requiring states to eliminate the segregation of people with disabilities and ensure people with disabilities receive services in the most integrated setting appropriate to their needs.

The groundbreaking decision has not only helped plaintiff Lois Curtis of Georgia and thousands of people with disabilities leave institutions and live in the community, but also continues to be applied beyond community living to employment and other services and supports. The recent settlement between the U.S. Department of Justice and the state of Rhode Island cited a violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and *Olmstead* in the segregation of people with disabilities through the state’s reliance on sheltered workshops and facility-based day programs.

To celebrate this landmark decision and reflect on the past, present and future of *Olmstead*, the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy, in coordination with the LEAD Center, will present an *Olmstead* Anniversary Webinar Event on July 16th from 3:00 - 4:30 p.m. Eastern. Reserve your spot now and stay tuned to www.leadcenter.org/webinars for more information in the coming weeks.

Confirmed panelists include:

· **Eve Hill**, Senior Counselor to the Assistant Attorney General, Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice (USDOJ)

· **Andrew McQuaide**, Acting State Coordinator for the State of Rhode Island’s implementation of USDOJ Interim Settlement Agreement

· **Michelle Brophy**, Director of Policy Implementation, State of Rhode Island Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Development Disabilities and Hospitals

· **Jennifer Mathis**, Deputy Legal Director/Director of Programs, Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law

· **Lisa Mills**, Subject Matter Expert, LEAD Center

Universal Access Strategies Highlighted at 2014 NAWDP Conference

Many job seekers who face challenges in getting and keeping jobs often find their way to their local American Job Center (AJC). This May, in response to requests for information on strategies for intake and orientation to accommodate a diverse range of job seekers, LEAD Center’s **Rebecca Salon**, Project Director, and **Elizabeth Jennings**, Assistant Project Director,
along with Miranda Kennedy, Director of Training for the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI), presented at the 2014 annual conference of the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals (NAWDP).

The session highlighted approaches to service delivery that, by design, open doors to people who face significant barriers to employment but ultimately benefit everyone. The universal design approaches are of special importance during initial contacts with people who may need accommodations to fully access services. Presenters engaged the audience in discussions of resources, approaches, strategies and products that enhance communication with and support to people with disabilities, as well as others with diverse cultural backgrounds and/or limited literacy or limited English proficiency, to assist them during intake and orientation processes, both at AJCs and through partnerships.

Participants from the audience offered examples of positive practices in which they engage, in addition to sharing situations with which they struggle. LEAD Center staff described universal design strategies that can be applied by AJC staff starting with their earliest interactions. This included a discussion of discovery and group discovery processes, components of customized employment that provide alternate, strength-based assessments which can be completed at an AJC or through AJC partners. Miranda Kennedy offered information about the Disability and Employment Community of Practice website, an AJC Access Guide and a 30-Second Training Series designed for AJCs.

This highly interactive session was followed the next day by a focus group, facilitated by LEAD Center staff, to learn more about the promising practices being implemented at AJCs and the challenges they face in successfully serving job seekers with disabilities.

View the LEAD Center's presentation slides offered at the 2014 NAWDP Annual Conference.

Shaping Service Systems to Promote Customized Employment in Illinois

The LEAD Center Customized Employment Initiative works across systems in Illinois and Kansas to support systems change. Subject matter experts work with policy makers on opportunities to blend and braid resources, identify and/or draft regulatory changes that align resources to meet long-term support needs, and integrate promising practice in the provision of services and supports to improve the employment outcomes of the state’s citizens with disabilities. This quarter, we will highlight LEAD’s work in Illinois and the exciting progress being made in their cross-system commitment to employment for people with disabilities. The state of Illinois has participated in ODEP’s Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program’s Community of Practice since July 2012.

LEAD Center consultant, Lisa Mills, is working with Illinois and assisting the governor’s Employment and Economic Opportunity for Persons with Disabilities Task Force and key state agencies with identification of policy changes, funding strategies and demonstration
opportunities that can advance the use of Customized Employment as an evidence-based strategy for improving employment outcomes. Under Governor Pat Quinn’s strong leadership, Illinois state government has prioritized the goal of increasing the number of Illinoisans with disabilities who are working in integrated, competitive employment. This cross-disability agenda has brought together Illinois’ state agencies in collaborative and complementary efforts focused on opening doors and removing barriers to gainful employment for citizens living with disabilities in Illinois.

An executive order, focused on increasing integrated employment of Illinoisans with disabilities, signed by Governor Quinn on June 3, 2014, mentions customized employment as an innovative initiative that has a role in increasing gainful employment opportunities. The executive order also calls for the creation of a “statewide multi-agency integrated program” advanced through a commitment to “improved state agency coordination efforts” and the creation of a “preliminary five-year plan” and “final plan” to improve integrated, competitive employment outcomes for Illinoisans with disabilities. The plans are required to include “strategies for improving services and supports necessary to make disability employment part of the state workforce development strategy.”

Their holistic cross-systems approach to supporting the effective use of Customized Employment strategies has thus far included:

1. Worknet Centers implementing small Group Discovery pilots that include jobseekers with disabilities and other significant barriers to competitive employment or re-employment;
2. The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity integrating Discovery-focused approaches into its Worknet on-line user experience;
3. The Illinois Division of Rehabilitation Services building in a focus on utilization of Discovery and Customized Employment strategies for specific target populations as part of its CMS-funded Balancing Incentives Program pilot efforts to increase employment service provider capacity to facilitate competitive employment for individuals with disabilities;
4. The Illinois Division of Developmental Disabilities building in a focus on the effective use and funding of customized employment strategies into its Balancing Incentives Program project, which includes specific initiatives to a) strengthen the Medicaid-financed service array and guiding definitions through a collaborative process with stakeholders and b) develop recommendations to improve reimbursement models for employment and related services in order to incentivize integrated employment as the first option for service; and
5. The state Medicaid agency building support for customized employment strategies into its plan to implement managed long-term care across all eligible disability populations.

The LEAD Center will continue to provide technical assistance during this very exciting and groundbreaking time as the state moves forward in implementing the executive order.

To learn more about customized employment, join us for next month’s LEAD Center
Webinar, Customized Employment: Moving Beyond the Basics on July 30, 2014 3:00 p.m. EDT, click on Employment on the LEAD Center website at www.leadcenter.org, and or visit ODEP’s resources on customized employment.

Webinar Mini-Series to Focus on Promoting Employment

The LEAD Center’s Promoting Employment webinar mini-series will launch on July 30th. Join us for advanced trainings on customized employment strategies, lessons learned from employers providing flexible work arrangements to improve the productivity and retention of employees with and without disabilities, and building on findings from the LEAD Center’s inaugural year pilot employment project with select Centers for Independent Living (CILs), sharing the activities of a CIL/AJC Community of Practice that focuses on the power of strategic partnerships to promote economic advancement and increase employment for customers with disabilities. Each webinar will feature a subject matter expert including staff from Griffin-Hammis, the Families & Work Institute, U.S. Business Leadership Network (USBLN), CILs and an employer. Webinars include:

July 30, 2014 from 3:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. ET
Customized Employment: Moving Beyond the Basics

August 27, 2014 from 3:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. ET
Best Practices in Employee Retention and Return-to-Work: Lessons Learned from Employers

September 24, 2014 from 3:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. ET
CILs and AJCs: Strategic Partnerships that Lead to Better Employment and Economic Advancement Outcomes

Registration for upcoming webinars can be found on the LEAD Center website at www.leadcenter.org/webinars. Please note that webinar titles and content are subject to change to provide rapid response training on emerging issues.

Did you miss a webinar, want to revisit a topic important to you or need to access training materials? The LEAD Center Webinar Archive provides easy-to-access archives of the completed webinars, including presentations, transcripts and answers to post-webinar questions.

We look forward to you joining us for the 2014 employment mini-series.

Employment, Health Care and Disability Monthly Policy Updates Examine Issues, Connections, Progress and Impact

The LEAD Center’s Employment, Health Care and Disability policy updates are monthly updates examining the intersection of disability, employment and health care policy. Launched in
November 2013, and created in partnership with the Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN), the LEAD Center Employment, Health Care and Disability policy updates provide policy makers, disability service professionals, individuals with disabilities and their families information on the latest developments regarding Medicaid, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and related topics, with a focus on improving employment outcomes for people with disabilities.

Read previous issues of the LEAD Center’s Employment, Health Care and Disability policy updates in the LEAD Center Resource Center. Interested in getting the latest edition delivered to your email box each month? Sign up here to be added to the LEAD Center mailing list.

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LEAD PEOPLE Bobby Silverstein, Principal - Powers Pyles Sutter & Verville, P.C.

Robert “Bobby” Silverstein, a principal at Powers Pyles Sutter & Verville, P.C, is a subject matter expert for the LEAD Center working on federal public policy and regulatory analysis, with a special emphasis on the Workforce Investment Act’s (WIA) Section 188 and the provisions that most affect universal access for people with disabilities. He has a federal regulatory and legislative practice in the areas of disability, health care, rehabilitation, employment, education, social security and civil rights, which he brings to the LEAD Center to support our policy initiatives, specifically the creation of a Section 188 Guide for use by American Job Center Equal Opportunity Officers.

Silverstein has more than 40 years experience analyzing complex public policy issues and developing comprehensive, innovative, and commonsense legislative and regulatory solutions that meet the divergent needs of multiple stakeholders. Silverstein gained considerable experience negotiating and drafting bipartisan, consensus legislation while serving in various staff capacities in the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate, including serving as staff director and chief counsel for the Subcommittee on Disability Policy of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions. In this role, Silverstein managed the development and negotiation of more than 20 bills, including the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act.
Silverstein has written several peer-reviewed journal articles and more than 75 papers and articles on public policy issues, from a disability perspective. He has presented keynote speeches before national and state organizations and trained leaders and others in more than 40 states regarding various public policy issues and the policymaking process. Silverstein is also the recipient of more than 10 national awards, including the Distinguished Services Award of the President of the United States. From 1997-2000, he served as an Associate Professor of Health Care Sciences at The George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences.

Silverstein earned his B.S. in Economics, *cum laude*, from the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania in 1971. He received his JD in 1974 from Georgetown University Law Center. Silverstein is a member of the District of Columbia Bar and the Virginia Bar.

Powers Pyles Sutter & Verville is a Washington, DC-based law firm that focuses on health care, education and the law of tax-exempt organizations.

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**LEAD PARTNERS National Council on Independent Living (NCIL)**

The National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) is a national partner of the LEAD Center. NCIL is the oldest national cross-disability, grassroots organization run by and for people with disabilities. Founded in 1982, NCIL represents thousands of organizations and individuals including: individuals with disabilities, Centers for Independent Living (CILs), Statewide Independent Living Councils (SILCs), and other organizations that advocate for the human and civil rights of people with disabilities throughout the United States.

NCIL’s mission is to advance independent living and the rights of people with disabilities through consumer-driven advocacy. NCIL envisions a world in which people with disabilities are valued equally and participate fully.

An outcome of the national disability rights and independent living movements, NCIL was founded to embody the values of disability culture and the independent living philosophy, which creates a new social paradigm and emphasizes that people with disabilities are the best experts on their own needs, that they have crucial and valuable perspectives to contribute to society, and are deserving of equal opportunities to decide how to live, work and take part in their communities.
Since its inception, NCIL has carried out its mission by assisting member CILs and SILCs in building their capacity to promote social change, eliminate disability-based discrimination, and create opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in the legislative process to affect change. NCIL promotes a national advocacy agenda set by its membership and provides input and testimony on national disability policy.

NCIL’s vision of equality, unfortunately, has not yet been fully realized. As a membership organization, NCIL needs the support of the nation’s advocates in order to achieve its goals and advance the disability rights movement.

For more information about NCIL, visit their website at ncil.org.

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