October Is National Disability Employment Awareness Month

The official theme of the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy's National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) in October is "My Disability Is One Part of Who I Am."

National Disability Employment Awareness Month is a nationwide campaign that raises awareness about disability employment issues and celebrates the contributions of America's workers with disabilities, past and present.

The 2015 theme echoes the ODEP-funded Campaign for Disability Employment's "Who I Am" television public service announcement (PSA), currently in national distribution, which showcases individuals who are not defined by their disabilities. The PSA features nine diverse
people with disabilities — some obvious and some not — sharing the many ways they describe themselves, from personal interests and family relationships to professional occupations. Among them is actor RJ Mitte, known for his work on the critically acclaimed television series "Breaking Bad."

NDEAM dates back to 1945, when Congress declared the first week in October "National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week." The word "physically" was deleted in 1962 to acknowledge individuals across the spectrum of disabilities. The week was expanded to a month by Congress in 1988 and its name changed to National Disability Employment Awareness Month. When ODEP was created in 2001, it was given responsibility for NDEAM, including the selection of its annual theme.

For more information about NDEAM, including a free downloadable poster in English or Spanish, and specific ideas on how different types of organizations can participate in the month-long observance, visit http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/ndeam/.

Office of Disability Employment Policy and National LEAD Center to Launch Employment First Web Platform

The Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), in partnership with the National LEAD Center, is launching a new Internet-based platform on Thursday, October 1. This platform provides a unique comprehensive resource for policy-makers, researchers, and external stakeholders to learn about national trends and activities in Employment First. This new resource will specifically provide outcome data across federally-funded systems that address the needs of people with disabilities including, but not limited, to education, intellectual and developmental disabilities adult services, mental health, workforce, and vocational rehabilitation. Additionally, users will have the ability to review an individual State’s legislation, regulations, policies, and existing systems-change initiatives. The platform will allow users to conduct advanced search inquiries into all policies and actions taken around a specific topic in order to scan what is happening nationwide in that area, as well as to compare several states’ outcome data simultaneously. The purpose of the platform is to improve access for policy-makers, researchers, disability stakeholders, and the public to learn about and garner a stronger understanding of the impact of Employment First investments in the United States.

ODEP will host a national public webinar on the launch of the new platform via the National LEAD Center on October 1, 2015 from 3:00-4:30 p.m. EST. Register to attend the webinar.

Advisory Committee on Increasing Competitive Integrated Employment for Individuals with Disabilities Releases Interim Report

The Advisory Committee on Increasing Competitive Integrated Employment for Individuals with
Disabilities (ACICIEID) recently released its interim report.

ACICIEID, created through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), is comprised of both federal officials and private citizens, in accordance with the stipulation in WIOA. These 18 disability-related employment experts, appointed by the Secretary of Labor, are responsible for providing the Secretary with an interim report (and eventual final report) containing an assessment of the current state of affairs with respect to employment for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD).

This interim report is divided into several subject areas and contains information related to the prevalence of segregated sub-minimum wage work environments for individuals with I/DD, and provides preliminary recommendations on how to begin to increase the number of individuals in integrated competitive employment.

The ACICIEID will continue its work for an additional year, at which time a final report will be released. We encourage you to attend the quarterly public meetings and to provide input when solicited.

Read the Advisory Committee on Increasing Competitive Integrated Employment for Individuals with Disabilities Interim Report for more information.

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LEAD Center Presents at Three National Conferences

LEAD Center presented at three different national conferences in the last few months: the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) Equal Opportunity Committee Meeting, the 2015 HCBS National Conference and the NCIL Conference.

Lisa Stern, LEAD Center’s Employment Policy Advisor, co-presented two sessions on July 30th at the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) Equal Opportunity Committee Meeting in Washington, D.C. Nearly 50 EO Officers attended the sessions on (1) Promising Practices in Achieving Universal Access and Equal Opportunity: A Section 188 Disability Reference Guide, and (2) An Open Exchange Session with States and Federal Partners. In addition to Stern, the panel featured Christopher Button, Ph.D., Policy Supervisor, Workforce Development, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP); Kim Vitelli, Division Chief, Employment and Training Administration (ETA); and Lee Perselay, Senior Policy Advisor, Civil Rights Center (CRC).

This meeting followed the release of the Section 188 Disability Reference Guide on July 6th. The Guide provides updated information and technical assistance that can help American Job Centers (AJCs) and their partners in the workforce development system meet the nondiscrimination and universal access requirements for individuals with disabilities in Section 188 of the Workforce Investment Act. For more information, view the Training and Employment Notice 1-15 and the Guide at http://www.dol.gov/oasam/programs/crc/188Guide.htm.
LEAD Center’s Rebecca Salon and Elizabeth Jennings, along with Serena Lowe from the Office of Disability Employment Policy, presented to an audience of 65 people at the 2015 HCBS National Conference on *Achieving Employment Outcomes: Opportunities to Leverage the Resources of the Workforce System* on September 1st. This highly interactive session provided a context for leveraging the substantial resources of the workforce system, highlighting opportunities made available by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), and providing examples of how partnerships with the workforce system can promote both employment outcomes and economic advancement for youth and adults with disabilities.

LEAD Center staff and partners showcased the achievements of the staff from the Montana Independent Living Project (MILP) and the Bozeman American Job Center at the NCIL Conference. The presentation on July 30th, *The Critical Role of Centers for Independent Living (CILs) in the Implementation of WIOA*, highlighted the win-win partnerships in which CILs and AJCs can engage to produce positive outcomes, and the opportunities under WIOA for CILs and the people they support to become involved in Unified State Planning, to become a presence at state and local Workforce Investment/Development Board meetings, and more. Many of the more than 100 attendees were provided with strategies to overcome barriers they may have encountered in creating workforce and vocational rehabilitation partnerships. Speed Davis, Senior Policy Advisor at U.S. DOL’s Office of Disability Employment Policy, provided a welcome and history of the LEAD Center’s work with CILs. LEAD Center’s Rebecca Salon and Brittany Taylor were joined by Tami Hoar, Program Director and Lacey Keller, Independent Living Specialist from the Montana Independent Living Project, Inc. (MILP), and by Michelle Letendre, Counselor, Bozeman Job Service, an AJC in Bozeman, MT.

**Historic Department of Justice’s Settlement with Oregon Phases Out Sheltered Workshops**

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) entered into a proposed settlement agreement earlier this month with Oregon that provides adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, who currently work in sheltered workshops in the state, with the support to achieve competitive integrated employment in their communities during the next seven years. Oregon also will no longer fund sheltered workshop placements for transition-age youth and working-age adults who are newly eligible for state-funded employment assistance. Instead, the state will develop individual plans and support systems for those interested in exploring competitive integrated employment options. According to DOJ, about 3,900 people with intellectual or developmental disabilities have worked in sheltered workshops in Oregon since 2013, with more than half earning less than three dollars per hour. The settlement calls for a cross-systems approach to implementing the settlement, with a strong reliance on the state’s existing HCBS waiver system. DOJ found that people with disabilities in Oregon were unnecessarily segregated into sheltered...
workshop settings to the exclusion of community-based alternatives, and that this unnecessary segregation of people with disabilities was a violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

LEAD Center will host a webinar on Thursday, October 22nd from 3:00-4:30 p.m. EST on this historic DOJ settlement. Please check the LEAD Center website for registration information or join the mailing list to receive additional details on the webinar.

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**LEAD Center Addresses Employers in St. Louis, MO about Hiring People with Disabilities**

LEAD Center’s Employment Policy Advisor, Lisa Stern, was invited to give the keynote address at *Accommodation for Success*, a seminar for employers held by the St. Louis Agency on Training and Employment (SLATE) in recognition of the 25th anniversary of the passage of the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The event brought together more than 100 human resource representatives from approximately 60 businesses in Missouri to learn about the challenges that people with disabilities face in the job market, as well as the many solutions that can be implemented.

The half-day event, held at St. Louis Community College at Forest Park campus in St. Louis on August 11th, was the result of SLATE’s proactive collaboration with the St. Louis City Workforce Investment Board, the Division of Developmental Disabilities, the Missouri Department of Mental Health, Vocational Rehabilitation and other stakeholders throughout the community. SLATE Executive Director, Michael Holmes, encouraged employers to attend, relaying that, “*Accommodation for Success* is designed to provide practical advice on ways to diversify the workplace and ensure that everyone has the means to participate in the workforce.”

A number of local agencies that provide specialized workplace services for people with disabilities were on-site to offer employers valuable information, resources and breakout sessions that covered topics such as reasonable accommodations, assistive technology, coaching and on-the-job supports, tax credits and (the very popular) recruiting etiquette and sourcing to find talent.

At the close of her keynote, Stern posed an important challenge that resonated with the St. Louis business community: “*Consider the power of one: one employer, one job, one opportunity and one person...at a time.*”

As a proud partner of the American Job Center Network, SLATE is committed to continuing their work with area employers and other stakeholders to ensure Missourians with disabilities are recruited, hired, retained and promoted in the workforce.

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LEAD Center and Griffin Hammis Associates Launch New Training on Self-Guided Discovery

LEAD Center, in partnership with Griffin-Hammis Associates, LLC, recently launched a pilot program offering training and on-site technical assistance on Self-Guided Discovery to assist American Job Center (AJC) staff and their partners to learn and utilize this Customized Employment technique. Self-Guided Discovery is an assessment process that takes inventory of a person’s skills, interests, experiences, relationships, etc. to create a positive personal employment profile. Since success is enhanced when there are several people supporting or participating in a jobseeker’s discovery process, AJCs, Vocational Rehabilitation staff and community partners were invited to apply for the pilot. Four sites were selected through a competitive process: Georgia, Arkansas, Rhode Island, and California (San Luis Obispo area). The sites received four in-depth, virtual trainings on Customized Employment and Self-Discovery techniques and are now utilizing their new assessment skills to collaborate and support jobseekers in their communities through the Self-Guided Discovery process that leads each person to a customized job.

Customized Employment strategies have been used by job seekers, family members, service providers, American Job Centers and other partners to promote a strength-based approach to employment for job seekers with barriers to employment. It has been particularly effective in supporting people with more significant disabilities or complex barriers to employment in achieving competitive integrated employment outcomes. The Self-Guided Discovery pilot is part of the LEAD Center’s Customized Employment Initiative focused on infusing customized employment and discovery strategies into the workforce system.

For more information about the Self-Guided Discovery pilot, or the LEAD Center Customized Employment Initiative, contact Rebecca Salon, Project Director, at rsalon@ndi-inc.org.

New LEAD Paper: Integrating Financial Capability and Asset Building Strategies into the Public Workforce Investment System

The new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) offers State Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) and local American Job Centers (AJCs) the opportunity to play a critical role in ensuring that youth and adults, with and without disabilities, have the chance to develop critical financial literacy and financial capability skills to enhance their ability to attain and maintain employment, leading to economic stability.

A new LEAD Center paper, Integrating Financial Capability and Asset Building Strategies into the Public Workforce Investment System, discusses why and how WIBs and AJCs should capitalize on this opportunity. It describes replicable models that local workforce systems have established to provide financial capability services including: integrating financial questionnaires into their
intake process to identify the services needed; referring customers to existing community services; facilitating financial education, financial coaching, credit and debt management; work incentive counseling; and providing support for free tax preparation so community members can take full advantage of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and other favorable tax provisions without spending their resources on professional tax preparation services.

**Louisville’s Financial Empowerment Integration Fall Convening**

On September 18, LEAD Staff returned to Louisville, Ky. to participate in the Workforce Development and Financial Empowerment Integration Fall Convening, hosted by Bank on Louisville. The meeting brought together 50 professionals (services providers, bankers, and community change agents) in a room surrounded by posters displaying individuals with disabilities who have improved their financial capability through the efforts of the Workforce Development and Financial Empowerment Integration workgroup. Several workgroup members were presented with plaques from Greg Fischer, Louisville Mayor, thanking them for their significant contributions and commitment to building a more inclusive community and improving the financial health of Louisvillians with disabilities.

At the event, LEAD Center’s Public Policy Co-Lead and NDI Executive Director, Michael Morris, discussed the national perspective on increasing and improving financial capability for people with disabilities and further integration of financial capability within targeted workforce development and other service delivery systems in Louisville. In addition to the LEAD Center, the convening featured presentations from the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) on regional perspectives on financial capability and from Tina Lentz, Louisville Metro Community Services and Bank On Louisville.

The event concluded with a roundtable discussion where LEAD Project Director, Rebecca Salon, and Assistant Project Director, Elizabeth Jennings, along with all attendees, were challenged to think about next steps to continue building a network of coordinated and integrated services to better meet the unique financial needs of people with disabilities, and provide them with the necessary tools and supports to build a more financially independent life and an even brighter economic future. The priorities set will become the framework for continued collaboration with the LEAD Center and add to the continued development of a blueprint for integrating workforce development and financial capability services to improve the economic advancement of individuals with disabilities.
Tami Hoar has a background of working with people with disabilities in a variety of venues. She is currently the **Montana Independent Living Project’s (MILP) Program Director**, responsible for monitoring and reporting for all grants and program funds and supervising staff, as well as overseeing the **Self-Directed Personal Assistance Program (SDPAS)**. Prior to coming to MILP, Tami was the Elder Services Specialist for the Belmont Senior Center. While there, she concurrently served as director of the Advocacy Program, a mentoring program for adults with developmental disabilities, for many years. Tami has a long history of volunteering with the local Special Olympics Committee and other disability organizations. In fact, she met her husband, Todd, when they were both teenagers, through a youth volunteer group that provides monthly social recreation activities for adults with developmental disabilities in Butte and surrounding communities. They later became, and still serve, as advisors to the group. Tami currently serves as the Region VIII Representative to the National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) Board and participates in numerous state and local committees and task forces.

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**LEAD PARTNERS Montana Independent Living Project**

**Montana Independent Living Project (MILP) is a not-for-profit agency providing services that promote independence for people with disabilities living in southwestern Montana. MILP supports the development and expansion of community-based services that directly facilitate independence, productivity and quality of life for people with disabilities. The organization provides information and referral, independent living skills training, individual, group and peer advocacy. MILP is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors consisting of at least 51 percent of people with disabilities.**

**MILP staff consists primarily of people with disabilities or who have experience with disabilities. The organization also provides timely information to people with disabilities, their families and**
the general public through the use of its staff’s expertise and access to the Internet and other information resources. MILP services include information and referral, independent living skills training, individual and group advocacy, peer advocacy, Medicaid’s Self-Directed Personal Assistance Services Program (SDPAS), Orientation & Mobility (O&M) skill instruction and Social Security benefits counseling for those who want to return to work.

For more information on Montana Independent Living Project, please visit http://www.milp.us/.

Important New Resources

- Integrating Financial Capability and Asset Building Strategies into the Public Workforce Development System
- 2015 Social Security Red Book
- Transition Quickguide: Take Charge of Planning and Managing Your Own Health and Career Goals
- Do Ask, Do Tell
- One Size Does Not Fit All: A New Look at the Labor Force Participation of People with Disabilities

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