



### GEORGIA – Vocational Rehabilitation Partnership

**The Challenge:** Job seekers with disabilities often need to navigate a maze of multiple systems to access resources that will allow them to get the skills they need and to achieve meaningful employment outcomes. Because of separate functional silos, duplication or fragmentation of services may result and thus not maximize effectiveness for people with disabilities.

**The Strategy:** The Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) grantee in Georgia has funded a full-time Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) within the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA) that creates a DEI specific VR counselor whose entire caseload would consist of shared co-enrolled WIOA title I (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs) and WIOA title IV (VR Program) customers. This counselor would be involved in all DEI strategies, including Integrated Resource Teams (IRT), blending and braiding of funds, customized employment, and career pathway training. The role of this counselor would serve as an example for the workforce system on how innovative strategic partnerships can be operationalized between an American Job Center (One-Stop) and VR Office.

**The Plan:** Mr. Cory Yeung, VR counselor, is employed with GVRA. Cory divides his time between two regions - the Northeast Georgia Workforce Region and the Central Savannah River Workforce Region. He mainly works out of the GVRA offices in Athens and Augusta, but sometimes travels to meet job seekers in their respective communities. His caseload exclusively consists of co-enrolled customers in WIOA. Since starting in January 2017, Cory received approximately 50 referrals from the DEI Disability Resource Coordinators (DRC) from both regions.

Cory works alongside each region's DRC to set up IRT meetings and assists in resource mapping. The IRT approach involves diversified service systems (e.g., WIOA, mental health, public education, local Housing or Transportation system, etc.) coordinating services and leveraging funding in order to meet the needs of an individual job seeker with a disability. Resource mapping is a strategy that is used to inform a job seeker of everything that is available to assist one in reaching an employment goal. Resources can include funding, education and work-based learning opportunities, and job accommodations. Cory also provides the service of counseling to support the job seeker work toward achieving the employment goal.

**System/Workforce/WIOA Outcomes:** Today, approximately sixty-five percent of all job seekers working with Georgia's DEI DRCs are also co-enrolled with the vocational rehabilitation program. Having Cory (from VR) as a part of Georgia's DEI project established an innovative model for how different workforce systems can work together for the benefit of our customers - job seekers with disabilities.

Cory shared that he has observed the challenges for someone seeking services from different entities. However, as a result of his field experience on integrating services and further implementing the WIOA vision to provide seamless customer service, he believes he has the required knowledge to assist people navigate through functional silos with more confidence. This collaborative partnership model has also provided several DEI DRCs a better understanding of the vocational rehabilitation process.

Overall, in an environment of tightened budgets, it is especially important for WIOA program partners to collaborate and pool resources to further maximize positive outcomes for both job seekers with disabilities and workforce programs.

**Key Career Pathway Elements:** Build cross-agency partnerships and clarify roles; Align policies and programs; and Measure system change and performance.

#### **Additional Resources on this Topic:**

- [Integration of VR into the Workforce Development System](#): The Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center provides training and technical assistance to State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies, related agencies, professionals and service providers to help develop skills and processes to meet requirements of WIOA. Integration of VR into the Workforce System is one of five topic areas. In this tool kit, you will find resources in the form of guidance, literature, and practice.
- [Integrated Resource Team \(IRT\) Information and Resources](#): This page provides information on what an IRT is, their many benefits, and how to form one with a job seeker.
- [WorkforceGPS Disability and Employment Community](#): An online resource destination for the American Job Center network, people with disabilities, and employers. In addition, this is a resource for all key stakeholders who partner with the workforce system to provide services and programs to people with disabilities and other barriers to employment.
  - Check out [The Playlists: Disability Resources for WIOA Practitioners](#) – Each playlist includes links to resources on a specific topic related to improving service to individuals with disabilities. The resources are intended for use by workforce development professionals, employers, rehabilitation services providers, adult educators, and other practitioners.
- [WIOA State Plans and Section 188 Compliance](#): This section of the LEAD Technical Assistance Center web page contains resources related to Section 188 compliance, AJC certification, and guidance on WIOA state plans. Included is a three part webinar series that can guide and inform an AJC on this topic with specific and relevant examples.
- [WorkforceGPS Career Pathways Community](#): An online resource that helps workforce development leaders, practitioners, and policymakers expand state and local career pathways efforts currently underway or being planned. The collection of resources will enhance knowledge, skills, and expertise in building effective career pathways systems.