



MARYLAND – Increasing Access for Individuals with Significant Disabilities

The Challenge: Individuals with more significant disabilities, such as Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities I/DD, may require additional support so that they are able to fully participate in workforce services offered within the American Job Center (AJC). AJC staff within the Anne Arundel County Career Center wanted to develop strategies that ensured every opportunity their agency offered would be fully inclusive for those with I/DD.

Background: The [Section 188 Final Rule](#) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) outlines affirmative outreach that targets various populations in order to “ensure that [recipients] are providing equal access to their WIOA Title I-financially assisted programs and activities.” This requirement means reasonable efforts should be made to include the protected members Section 188 covers such as individuals with disabilities.

The Strategy: The Maryland Disability Employment Initiative (MD DEI) site in Anne Arundel County implemented strategies to ensure all persons with disabilities, inclusive of the I/DD population, would be included in every activity within their WIOA Title I program. With a DEI grant focus on increasing employment outcomes for youth and adults with significant disabilities, a plan was implemented to develop strong partnerships between staff administering WIOA Title I and local Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP).

The Implementation Plan: MD DEI developed a Cohesive Resource Committee. In forming this committee, MD DEI recognized that persons with I/DD often rely on a myriad of different CRPs within their local communities to assist with personal care, financial matters, and independent living goals, which can include employment. In Maryland, this is carried out by the state Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA), who is responsible for providing these specialized services and contracts with several CRPs throughout the state. MD DEI bridged connections and collaboration between DDA and the Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation (AAWDC) to help both agencies discover how they could innovatively coordinate activities to support individuals with I/DD access employment opportunities.

Coordinated by AAWDC’s Disability Resource Coordinator, Lisa Dunaway, this committee originally began meeting on a bi-monthly basis and then transitioned to meeting quarterly to discuss needs, challenges, and opportunities related to securing competitive integrated employment for individuals with I/DD. Currently, committee members meet on an as needed basis based on successful informal connections established. As a result of building these networking partnerships, buy-in was created from the beginning between leadership and front-line staff within both CRP agencies and AAWDC.

OUTCOMES

Since the implementation of the Cohesive Resource Committee in 2017, many lessons were learned. AAWDC staff learned about more innovative strategies to include job seekers with I/DD who often require the assistance of a job coach. CRP job coaches learned how to help their consumers access and benefit from AAWDC workforce services. Overall, the committee helped to create Job Readiness workshops, Reverse Job Fairs designed to ensure better inclusion of consumers with I/DD, as well as support individuals through integrated resource teams.

Since 2017, there have been eight DDA consumers enrolled in WIOA Title I and additional individuals with I/DD have been provided core services. Front-line staff within AAWDC report feeling more equipped to meet the needs of the I/DD community. Area CRP agencies report appreciation in having resources available to their consumers. Today, job seekers with I/DD and their job coaches can be found attending workshops, utilizing the resource room, and taking advantage of recruitment events at the Anne Arundel AJC. AAWDC hopes to continue facilitating Cohesive Resource Committee meetings and increasing the number of co-enrollments.

Key Career Pathway Elements:

- Design Education and Training Programs
- Build Cross-Agency Partnerships and Clarify Roles
- Align Policies and Programs
- Identify Funding Needs and Sources

Additional Resources on this Topic:

- [Promising Practices In Achieving Nondiscrimination And Equal Opportunity: A Section 188 Disability Reference Guide](#)
A Reference Guide developed by the U.S. Department of Labor to assist AJC programs by providing promising practices that correlate with specific nondiscrimination and equal opportunity requirements in Section 188 of WIOA and the regulations implementing Section 188 of WIOA.
- [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.
 - [Workplace Resources for Intellectual Disability](#): Check out these resources that can help workforce professionals better understand this disability type to facilitate employment opportunities.
- [JAN Accommodation and Compliance: Intellectual Impairment](#): This resource, from the Job Accommodation Network (JAN), provides information and ideas on accommodating individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- [Integrated Resource Team \(IRT\) Information and Resources](#): This page contains links to information and resources to assist with the understanding and implementation of the Integrated Resource Team approach.
- [WorkforceGPS Career Pathways Community](#): An online resource that helps workforce development leaders, practitioners, and policymakers expand state and local career pathways efforts. The collection of resources will enhance knowledge, skills, and expertise in building effective career pathways systems.