

Work Matters

A Framework for States on Workforce Development for People with Disabilities

THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

AND

NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF STATE LEGISLATURES



Work Matters: A Framework for States on Workforce Development for People with Disabilities

TESTIMONY TO:

The New Mexico Disabilities Concerns Subcommittee

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Background Regarding Employment of People with Disabilities

- People with disabilities are a key factor in states' ability to build strong, inclusive workforces that translate into economic success
- **Employment** addresses two challenges at one time: cost-effective means to empower individuals with disabilities and strengthens the workforce
 - Higher unemployment rate of people with disabilities
 - Disproportionate rates of poverty and economic insecurity

Background (cont.)

- State policymakers have adopted multi-faceted approaches to enhancing employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities
- Employing people with disabilities is an important facet of overall state workforce development policy
- In recognition of this need, NCSL and CSG came together to establish the National Task Force on Workforce Development for People with Disabilities

About NCSL: The National Conference of State Legislatures

<http://www.NCSL.org/Research/Labor-and-Employment/Disability-Employment.aspx>

- Nation's preeminent bipartisan organization representing and serving the legislators and legislative staff of all 50 states, the District of Columbia and the territories
- Provides its constituents research and information services on hundreds of legislative policy issues, technical assistance and extensive professional development opportunities
- Has staff expertise available to support state research support and technical assistance requests on disabilities employment policy issues
- Maintains a disabilities employment online resource portal housing *Work Matters* materials, related policy research documents and tools

About CSG: The Council of State Governments

<http://www.CSG.org/NTPWD/WorkMatters.aspx>

- Nation's only non-partisan, not-for-profit organization serving all three branches of state government
- Region-based forum that fosters the exchange of insights and ideas to help state officials shape public policy
- Offers unparalleled regional, national and international opportunities to network, develop leaders, collaborate and create problem-solving partnerships
- Boasts nationally recognized experience as an impartial convener of state officials, a provider of training and technical assistance, and a primary source of educational policy information

About SEED: The State Exchange on Employment & Disability

- Goal is to foster a nationwide workforce more inclusive of people with disabilities through a state policy-based approach.
- Expands capacity of state intermediary organizations (such as CSG, NCSL) to offer disability employment policy and subject-matter expertise
- Readies state intermediaries to respond to inquiries and requests on disability employment and workforce development issues
- Funded by the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)

National Task Force on Workforce Development for People with Disabilities

- Convened by CSG in partnership with NCSL
- Implemented under the auspices of the DOL/ODEP's SEED initiative
- Goal was to explore key issues around the employment of people with disabilities, identify key themes, and provide policy options for states
- Results served as the foundation for a disability employment policy framework for the states

National Task Force (cont.)

- Co-chaired by:
 - CSG 2016 President Governor Jack Markell (DE)
 - State Senator Beau McCoy (NE)
- Oversaw work of four subcommittees, each composed of:
 - 10-12 state policymakers
 - 4-6 non-voting private-sector stakeholders and experts

National Task Force (cont.)

Four Subcommittees:

1. Career Readiness & Employability
2. Hiring, Retention, & Reentry
3. Entrepreneurship, Tax Incentives, & Procurement
4. Transportation, Technology & Other Employment Supports

Policy Framework

Guiding principles:

- Disability is a natural part of the human experience
- Four goals of disability policy—equal opportunity, full participation, economic self-sufficiency, and independent living
- Disability can develop at any time
- “Nothing about us without us”
- People with disabilities under-utilized in workforce and experience social and economic disadvantage
- Disability inclusion boosts bottom line

Policy Framework

Overarching themes:

- Leading by example
- Adopting robust reporting requirements—
“what gets measured gets done”
- Increasing coordination and collaboration
- Including universal design
- Extending diversity and inclusion initiatives to
include disability

Policy Framework

Policy options categorized under five areas or topics:

- Laying the Groundwork
- Preparing for Work
- Getting to & Accessing Work Opportunities
- Staying at Work
- Supporting Self-Employment & Entrepreneurship

Laying the Groundwork

- States as Model Employers
- Capacity of Private and Nonprofit Sector
- External and Internal Focus on Disability Awareness
- Interagency Coordination and Collaboration

Preparing for Work

- Education and Career Readiness
- Skill Development and Job Exploration
- Family Engagement

Getting To & Accessing Work Opportunities

- Transportation
- Information and Communication Technology
- Built Environment

Staying-at-Work

- Stay-at-Work (SAW) Programs
- Return-to-Work (RTW) Programs
- Navigate the Complexities of Benefits and Work Incentives
- Supplement Existing Financial Incentive

Self Employment & Entrepreneurship

- State Workforce Development Systems
- Possible Career Strategies
- State Procurement, Certifications, and Financial Incentives for Disability-Owned Businesses

Conclusion

Further study of ***Work Matters*** policy options could be facilitated by a state-level task force provides the mechanism to:

- Review innovative disability-related employment programs and policies adopted by other states;
- Compare and contrast these programs and policies to New Mexico's programs and policies; and
- Report findings and recommendations that work for the state of New Mexico and its residents with

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