

Disability and Career Centers

2018



A proud partner of the [americanjobcenter](#) network

David Hoff

Project Director

Institute for Community Inclusion

University of Massachusetts, Boston



**Best Practices
Conference**

March 1, 2018



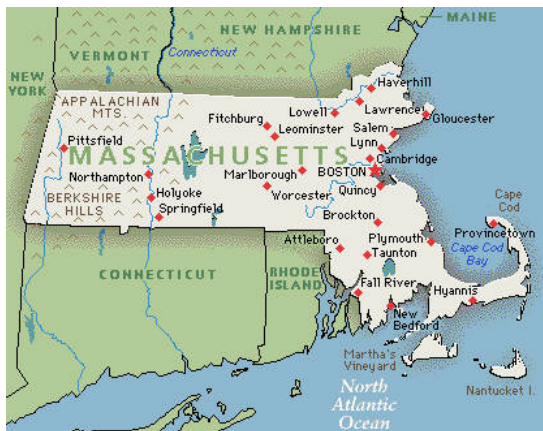
INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY INCLUSION
promoting the inclusion of people with disabilities



Disability: Who are we talking about?



Disability by the Numbers



- In Massachusetts, **12%** of population has a disability
 - **39%** of people with disabilities participate in the workforce
- vs.
- **80%** of those without disabilities
 - **6%** of individuals using Career Centers in MA identify as having a disability



BASIC PREMISE

Same job placement and
career development
strategies as any other
individual



*Successful employment for people with
disabilities:*

the same as everyone else

- Clear goals
- Clear plan
- Use of personal networks
- Persistence
- A good job match
- A supportive work environment



Disability-Specific Considerations

- Disclosure
- Accommodations
- Benefit issues
- Others





- **WIOA: The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014**
- Signed into law July 22, 2014
- Reauthorizes the **Workforce Investment Act of 1998**, including the **Rehabilitation Act**



Core Programs Under WIOA

- 1. Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Workforce Investment Programs**
- 2. State Employment Service**
- 3. Adult Education and Literacy**
- 4. Public Vocational Rehabilitation**

**9 Additional Federal Programs that are
Mandated One-Stop Partners,
*but Not Core Programs***



WIOA Workforce System Disability Changes

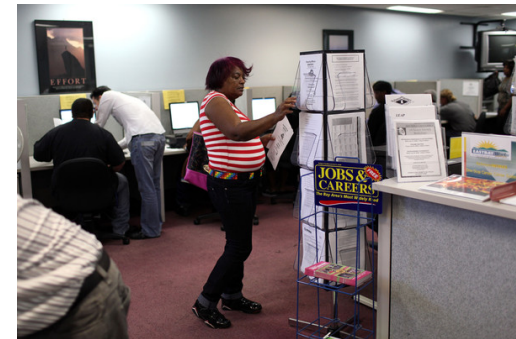
- Local boards must ensure **sufficient service providers** for individuals with disabilities
- State workforce boards must develop strategies for **career pathways for individuals with disabilities**
- **Annual assessment of One-Stop Career Center accessibility required**
- **Out-of-School Youth Services:** Individuals with disabilities automatically eligible



WIOA Pre-Employment Transition Services



Potential Role of One-Stop Career Centers for Youth with Disabilities





- **DEI 3: Career Center General**
 - Sites: Hampden, North Shore, Lowell, Franklin Hampshire
 - Federal Funding: 10/01/12 to 3/31/16
 - Continued via state funding (DIP) through 3/31/17

- **DEI 5: Career Pathways for Adults**
 - Sites: Worcester, North Central, Metro North
 - Federal funding: 10/10/14 to 3/31/18

- **DEI 7: Career Pathways for Youth**
 - Sites: Lowell, Hampden
 - Federal Funding – 10/1/16 to 3/31/20





https://dei.workforcegps.org


[Tell us how we're doing!](#)

[Join now! It's free. / Password Assistance](#)

[Resource Library](#) [ETA Grants](#) [Communities](#) [Collections](#) [Events](#) [Online Training](#) [Member Directory](#) [About](#)

**WorkforceGPS**
Navigate to Success

**Disability Employment Initiative**




Disability Employment Initiative

[Home](#) [About](#) [Events](#) [Resource Library](#)


Welcome to the Disability Employment Initiative


This site is an online resource destination to support the 24 grantees implementing the **Disability Employment Initiative (DEI)** Grant. Throughout the country, there are approximately 85 Disability Resource Coordinators serving on the front lines in coordination with State Project Leads to help strengthen the capacity of American Job Centers to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities. We sincerely welcome all visitors to this site in an effort to highlight the work we do and promote the lessons learned to further increase the prosperity of people with disabilities.


Featured Content


**Resources**

Front Line DEI Resources
These resources are designed to support the daily work of DEI grantees. The DEI strategies are implemented by Disability Resource Coordinators (DRCs) who are front line professional employment counselors with expertise and trainin...


 [DEI Monthly Resource Updates](#)

 [DEI Best Practices Highlights](#)


 [DEI Employment Network Tools](#)

 [DEI Grant Information](#)


Resources

 [Disability Employment Initiative Administrative...](#)


Posted On: 2/20/2018

 [Round VII Disability Employment Initiative St...](#)

Posted On: 2/19/2018

 [Round VIII Disability Employment Initiative S...](#)

Posted On: 2/16/2018



WorkforceGPS Options

ISSUE NO. 29 • 2017

CAREER CENTER SUCCESS WITH
THE ONE-STOP

TOOLS FOR INCLUSION

CAREER CENTER SUCCESS: Services and Practices Made Possible by the DEI Grant

by Lydia Landin, Darla Domin, and Caro Narby

The DEI projects identified a series of services and practices that were found to be effective in meeting the needs of job seekers with disabilities using One-Stop Career Centers. This brief summarizes nine of these practices, and then offers recommendations for duplication.

1. Federal funding made it possible to create and support a disability resource coordinator, or DRC position at each One-Stop.

A core requirement of the federal funding for the DEI project was the creation of a disability resource coordinator (DRC) position in each One-Stop Career Center. The DRC is a specialized role on the disability population, and has been critical to helping centers reach out to and support job seekers with disabilities to achieve employment success.

Through interviews, it was made clear that the work of DRCs is crucial to the overall objectives of the One-Stop Career Centers, and to the success of job seekers with disabilities.

The DRC provides intensive one-on-one services and seamless access to the One-Stop, using a relationship-based model. This approach is much more labor-intensive than typical One-Stop staff roles. DRCs indicated that cases are never really "closed," and that they remain available to clients as needed.

It was found that without staff specifically dedicated to serving clients with disabilities, One-Stops might experience challenges in meeting the needs of the population of job seekers with significant disabilities.

The DEI grant was instrumental in providing enhanced financial support of various services offered by One-Stop Career Centers. These funds were essential not only for creating, but also maintaining the positions of DRCs at the various centers.

The funds provided by DEI were vital to ensuring that people with disabilities have full access to One-Stop resources and are supported by the center staff. Without the financial resources provided under the grant, One-Stops may struggle to sustain the positions of DRCs. Some centers have developed significant

INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY INCLUSION

University of Massachusetts Boston

ISSUE NO. 30 • 2017

CAREER CENTER SUCCESS WITH
THE TICKET TO WORK

TOOLS FOR INCLUSION

CAREER CENTER SUCCESS: Using the Power of the Ticket to Work Program

by David Huff

Ticket to Work is a program from the Social Security Administration. It is designed to help job seekers become successfully employed, while reducing their reliance on Social Security disability cash benefits (Social Security Disability Income - SSDI, or Supplemental Security Income - SSI). Under the DEI project, each of the project sites was required to become a vendor under Ticket to Work, if they were not one already. Over the course of the project, three of the sites (Plumerville, Springfield, Career Point, Holyoke; Career Center of Lowell) generated significant revenue under the Ticket program, and continue to do so post-project. The purpose of this brief is to examine the reasons for the success of these One-Stop Career Centers under the Ticket, and how these successes can be replicated.

Ticket to Work Background

If an individual assigns their Ticket to an approved vendor, known as an Employment Network or EN, and the EN assists the individual in becoming successfully employed with monthly income at or above specific levels, the Employment Network receives payment. The EN receives payments on an ongoing basis, for up to several years, as long as the Ticket holder maintains employment at specified earning levels. For 2017, the individual must earn at least \$840 in gross earnings month for the Employment Network to begin receiving payments. The level of earnings required increases over time. Total potential payments are approximately \$25,000 paid out over several years. (A full breakdown of payments, is available online from the Ticket to Work Payments at Glance.)

The formula for Ticket payments is designed to create incentives for ENs to assist individuals with their employment needs while reducing the individual's reliance on Social Security cash benefits over the long-term. For individuals on SSDI, their Social Security payments are gradually reduced in relation to earned income (after the first \$85 in gross monthly income, cash benefits are reduced by \$1 for every \$2 in

INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY INCLUSION

University of Massachusetts Boston

ISSUE NO. 27 • 2017

CAREER CENTER SUCCESS WITH
THE ONE-STOP

TOOLS FOR INCLUSION

CAREER CENTER SUCCESS: Effective Case Management for Job Seekers

by Caro Narby, Darla Domin, and Lydia Landin

A core requirement of the federal funding for the DEI project was the creation of a disability resource coordinator (DRC) position in each One-Stop Career Center. Each DRC is responsible for providing services and guidance to the job seekers with disabilities who pursue assistance through the One-Stop.

Case management is the most central and crucial aspect of the DRC's role. Understanding how DRCs manage their caseload is an important step toward identifying best practices.

The following are some conclusions shared by DRCs about the way case management function in their roles.

Case management is intensive and time-consuming.

The DEI grant supported one full-time DRC within each service region. As such, DRCs handle very large and challenging caseloads. One DRC stated, "Every person is different and this caseload is very labor intensive. For job seekers with disabilities the follow-through is very tricky."

Managing each case begins with assessing the job seeker's individual needs. One DRC described creating an initial plan of action, which began with the question "How job-ready are you?"

To support each job seeker, the DRC needs to have a clear and honest understanding of the customer's skills, goals, and needs. Disability disclosure is a crucial part of the process, but it can also be a sensitive topic, so a high level of trust is necessary between the DRC and the job seeker.

The needs of job seekers with disabilities are distinct, and may be intensive. In addition to helping job seekers with the employment placement process, DRCs may have to help their customers secure other basic needs, such as housing and transportation.

The DRC may take on the responsibility of coordinating services with other organizations and agencies, such as the state Department of Developmental Services (DDS), Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC), Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB), Department of Mental Health (DMH), and private service providers. DRCs connect job seekers to training

INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY INCLUSION

University of Massachusetts Boston

ISSUE NO. 26 • 2017

CAREER CENTER SUCCESS WITH
THE ONE-STOP

TOOLS FOR INCLUSION

CAREER CENTER SUCCESS: The Critical Role of Benefits Counseling

by Darla Domin, Lydia Landin, and Caro Narby

Addressing Job-Seeker Benefit Concerns

A primary barrier to employment of individuals with disabilities is concerns over the impact of earnings from employment on public benefits. These benefits include cash benefits from Social Security, health coverage via Medicaid and Medicare, SNAP (food stamps), subsidized housing, and others.

The Social Security Administration funds Work Incentive Planning and Assistance (WIPA) programs to provide benefits counseling to individuals with disabilities. The purpose of WIPA services is to address any questions or concerns Social Security beneficiaries have regarding the impact of earnings on benefits, and to encourage them to pursue employment.

However, the availability of WIPA services is limited. To expand benefits assistance, DEI grant funds enhanced access to WIPA services from BenEFan at UMass Medical School. CWICs (Community Work Incentive Counselors) from BenEFan provided benefits counseling to DEI participants who were Social Security beneficiaries. (For the purposes of this publication, we will refer to CWICs as "benefit specialists.") This brief discusses the impact of benefits counseling, including the enhanced benefits counseling funded by DEI, on individuals' efforts to become successfully employed.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Although described in the present tense, as noted, some of the enhanced access to benefits assistance discussed in this brief has not been sustained since grant funding ended. At the end of the brief, we describe possible options for reinstituting this enhanced level of benefits assistance.

The benefits counseling process.

As part of the initial intake process, the DRC determines whether assistance in managing public benefits would help an individual in going to work. The DRC facilitates a referral to the benefit specialist. The specialist then works with the individual on their specific

INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY INCLUSION

University of Massachusetts Boston

ISSUE NO. 28 • 2017

CAREER CENTER SUCCESS WITH
THE ONE-STOP

TOOLS FOR INCLUSION

CAREER CENTER SUCCESS: Collaboration and Partnerships for Improved Employment Outcomes

by Darla Domin, Lydia Landin, and Caro Narby

Collaboration with partners was instrumental for achieving the goals set out under DEI 3. One-Stop Career Centers were expected to coordinate with partners at the state and local levels, in order to partner on individual recruitment and service delivery, and mutually share organizational expertise, to support access to supports needed for successful employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. Potential partners included those co-located onsite as well as external entities not officially connected to the Career Center system.

One-Stop Career Centers are built on the premise of multiple agencies and partners coming together at one location to provide easy access to services, including those mandated under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, as well as optional partners. One of the benefits of collaboration and partnership formation under DEI was to expand on this, with One-Stops tapping into resources that the centers did not offer.

Interviews with disability resource coordinators (DRCs), One-Stop staff, benefit specialists, job seekers, and agency partners were conducted and analyzed to explore how partnerships formed, and the impact that inter- and intra-agency partnerships have on job seekers' success in achieving an employment outcome.

Career centers and their staff reported using resources from multiple sources to meet the needs of the job seeker. Many job seekers have multiple and varied service (or resource) needs, which have to be met prior to or concurrently with a job search. Job seekers mentioned that working with multiple agencies led to their success.

The DRC serves as the liaison to introduce and orient job seekers to their agencies and professionals. These may include the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, Department of Developmental Services, Department of Mental Health, adult basic education partners, community colleges, and benefits specialists.

DEI Project Background

The Massachusetts Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) was a three-year federal grant from the US Department of Labor awarded in 2012 to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development. The project was known as DEI 3, as it was the third round of funding awarded to states under this federal initiative.

The overall purpose of the DEI 3 project was to improve the accessibility and responsiveness of the Massachusetts workforce development system to meet the needs of job seekers with disabilities. Through project funding, model demonstration activities were conducted via the One-Stop Career Center (American Job Center) system, in four workforce regions: Hampden, Franklin/Hampshire, Lowell, and the North Shore. Each region worked with a variety of individuals with disabilities to assist them with their employment needs, with a focus on individuals with a high level of need.

Grant funds were used to support a disability resource coordinator (DRC) in each region who assisted individuals with disabilities with employment and related needs. The DRC used strategies focused on collaborative efforts, both within the One-Stop and with external entities and agencies. The intent of these efforts was to build capacity in each of these regions to meet the needs of customers with disabilities to become successfully employed and advance in their careers, with this expanded capacity sustained after grant funding ended. Post-grant funding, the DRC positions have been maintained at some level.

In addition, the intent of the project was to identify practices that can be replicated in other regions and One-Stop Career Centers. This series of briefs supports these efforts, documenting best practices that occurred under DEI 3, so that they can be replicated both within and outside Massachusetts.

"Statewide DRCs and agencies share resources and best practices. This is helpful, as is accessing resources in the region and forging relationships with other agencies."

—Career center executive director

INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY INCLUSION

University of Massachusetts Boston

www.communityinclusion.org/careercentersuccess/



Career Center Success Brief Series and Videos

The Career Center Success series focuses on enhancing the capacity of One-Stop Career Centers (American Job Centers) to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities. The series features five written briefs that document best practices resulting from the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) in Massachusetts, funded by the US Department of Labor from 2012 to 2016. (Massachusetts has subsequently received two additional rounds of DEI funding.) Each written brief has one or more accompanying videos. The Career Center Success series can be used by a wide range of audiences:

- workforce development system professionals to increase their knowledge in best practices in meeting the needs of job seekers with disabilities
- as a useful guide for disability service providers and systems on how to work in partnership with One-Stop Career Centers and other components of the general workforce development system.
- by individuals with disabilities on how to best utilize One-Stop Career Centers for career success.

Each written product in the series provides an overview of the topic, findings from site visits and interviews, and a series of recommendations for sustainability and replication. The accompanying videos provide additional information, background, and examples regarding the topic.

CAREER CENTER SUCCESS: The Critical Role of Benefits Counseling

This brief provides information regarding the importance of a high level of access to quality counseling on public benefits to assist and encourage individuals to pursue employment.

 [Download *The Critical Role of Benefits Counseling*](#)

Video: Marjorie Longo of BenePlan at UMass Medical School, discusses her role as a Community Work Incentive Coordinator working in partnership with One-Stop Career Centers.

