

New Hampshire

RAP Sheet

The Latest in Disability Research, Advocacy, Policy, and Practice

Winter Issue 2006

CRACKING THE JOB MARKET



Supporting a Meaningful Life

John Vance, M.Ed., Executive Director of ACCESS (Associates in Career and Community Employment Support Services, Inc.)

Welcome to the Winter Issue of the Rap Sheet. Despite federal protections and specialized vocational programs, citizens with disabilities are conspicuously absent from our nation's workforce. Less than 30% of people with disabilities are employed in any capacity and the number is even lower for those with significant disabilities. In this issue we examine the reasons behind these disturbing figures and look at what needs to happen to ensure that all citizens have opportunities for meaningful employment.

All of us, including people with developmental disabilities, want to have rich and meaningful lives. Significant resources have been devoted to creating a service system whose goals include the promotion of community participation and employment for people with disabilities. For the most part our service system has met with only marginal success; people remain in "programs" and true community inclusion never happens. To make real change we need to focus on supporting people in ways that promote enriching personal relationships. Only by enhancing the valued status of people with disabilities, can we move beyond taking care of someone and move toward empowering individuals and communities.

How Employment Leads to Valued Status

A typical first question when you meet someone new is likely to be, "So what do you do (for work)?" Our jobs and how we spend our days determine the overall quality of our lives. At its best, work provides us a sense of accomplishment and the knowledge that we are contributing to something important. It also helps us to feel valued and gives us a sense of belonging. No matter what our jobs, we have expectations about working. We will make money. We will have opportunities to develop relationships and friendships. We will be productive and have a sense of purpose and fulfillment. We will be valued and appreciated for our contributions.

People who experience some sort of disability are often marginalized and devalued. Supporting these individuals to find and maintain meaningful work is critical to changing how our society views people with disabilities. In the twenty years I have been working with people with disabilities, I have found that *nothing is more powerful than meaningful employment* in helping people become valued, contributing, and interdependent members of their community. In 1988 I founded ACCESS, an employment service that focuses on the gifts that each person can bring to their workplace and to their community. We are about more than just helping people find jobs. In fact, having a job that doesn't serve one's personal goals can actually be damaging. I can't count the number of times I've encountered well-intentioned agencies "placing" people in jobs where they hated the tasks, had no real relationships, and, as a result, were "noncompliant." I would be too.

SUSAN COVERT, EDITOR

A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT BY THE
DISABILITIES RIGHTS CENTER, INSTITUTE ON DISABILITY, AND NH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL

(Cover story continued)

At ACCESS our emphasis is on helping people to form relationships that are mutually beneficial. This is possible only if we truly know and value the person we are serving. Employment is the *vehicle* that leads us closer to our personal goals: it should not be thought of as the goal itself. When we make employment the goal, we are tempted to place people in inferior jobs and in situations that further marginalize them. The job is not the point; the point must be to help people engage in what is meaningful to their personal development.

For work to be truly meaningful it must include positive and caring relationships and friendships with co-workers. In order to help people find meaningful work, we must understand who they are and what they need from work. For a person with a developmental disability, this means taking into account both their dreams *and* how they are viewed by society. What is this person's gift and who would best appreciate this gift?

Finding What is Meaningful

If the desired outcome is for someone to be valued, we cannot settle for "just a job." Take for example, Paul who wants to be a computer programmer. While we assisted Paul in finding a paying job he likes at a country club, we also arranged for an internship programming computers for the Mountain Corporation. We only discovered Paul's desire to be a computer programmer by *getting to know him*. Paul loves playing computer games. By talking with Paul about his passion, we learned that he would like to write computer games. Now he is on his way to meeting his personal goal, working on something he enjoys, can feel good about, and with people who value him. The income he is earning from his job at the country club will help him when he goes off to college next year. Paul will never experience a day program.

To be meaningful, employment must meet the individual requirements of the person being served, and not be simply what the agency chooses to offer. Meaningful employment entails many things including:

- ◆ Being valued by your employer and co-workers for your talents and abilities.
- ◆ Earning a reasonable wage.
- ◆ Engaging in something you find rewarding and worthwhile.
- ◆ Developing meaningful relationships and friendships with those at work.
- ◆ Being valued for *who you are*.

Too often people in human services are afraid to dream big; they are willing to settle for too little. For example, when someone expresses an interest in music they get a toy Schroeder piano and say plink on this awhile and call it good enough. We need to do a better job of helping people find the best ways to fulfill their interests. I think about James who has autism. He and a staff member practiced piano together. It soon became apparent that musically James was outdistancing the staff member. We asked each other – what is the next level? We found a local and nationally renowned chamber music pianist, called him up, and introduced him to James. Why – because James has a gift that is valuable.

The Challenge We Face

So by now, some of you who work in provider agencies are saying, "Yes, this makes sense. Yes, this is what I've been trying to do, but we have all of these Medicaid regulations and too much work. How can I possibly do this?" My response to you is, "You can." Our system is in an evolutionary process. There are good people at the State level, and they, like you, want to do what is truly in the best interest of the people we serve. If your agency promotes a "day program," question it. Will an individual's participation in this program lead to greater independence and a more valued role in the community, or does the program simply fill the person's day? If you feel that the people you are serving are getting short-changed, make suggestions about how they can be supported, through their employment, to attain meaningful connections in their communities. Work to support only those relationships that will enable a person with a disability to be understood, respected, and appreciated – in short, *to be valued*.

If you have questions or would like additional information about creating positive changes through employment, please contact John Vance at j_vance@conknet.com.

Exploring His Options

Julia Freeman-Woolpert, Disabilities Rights Center

Matt Higgins remembers 2002 as his worst school year in a string of bad ones. That was the year Matt was kicked out of private school and returned to Winchester High School, where he had been less than successful in the past. At Winchester, things went from bad to worse. He was frequently suspended, and his social life and self-confidence plummeted to an all-time low.

At his spring Individual Education Planning meeting, Matt's education team recommended that as part of his transition plan Matt work with ACCESS, a local program offering specialized employment services. When Matt started working with ACCESS that summer, first on the agenda was confidence building. Between his Asperger's and Tourette's Syndromes, and his tanked self esteem, Matt's ability to communicate and interact with others needed some serious work. For Matt, just having a conversation was a frightening prospect. At ACCESS he was coached on the practical aspects of communication such as eye contact and speaking without relying on notes. Staff at ACCESS helped Matt develop strategies for initiating conversations. For his senior project, Matt gave a public presentation to a college class. It was a great success.

At the same time he was working on his communication skills, Matt was also exploring vocational possibilities. With his strong interest in films and filmmaking, ACCESS arranged for Matt to have a brief internship at Ken Burns' studio in Walpole, where he worked on *Unforgivable Blackness: The Rise and Fall of Jack Johnson*.

With increased skills and confidence, Matt started looking for jobs. Matt knew that he did not need to put information about his disability on job applications or tell employers about his disability. Unless you need accommodations in order to do your job, you do not have to ever tell your employer about your disability. When applying for a job, Matt said, "My advice is, don't mention it." Once hired, Matt told people he had a disability, because "you shouldn't have to hide it."

Matt's first job was as a dishwasher at Family Ties Restaurant. While he didn't like washing dishes (who does?), Matt liked most of the people. His philosophy was, "Even if you don't like someone, try and get along with them anyway. It's really, really important." Through his work at the restaurant, Matt met his current group of friends. They started playing poker every Wednesday night and it grew from there. Matt and his friends still get together regularly. They attend concerts, go bowling, take road trips, and generally have a good time. An active social life has been one of the lasting benefits of the job.

Matt's job at the restaurant was a valuable learning experience. If he had followed conventional advice, he would never have considered working in a noisy, crowded, brightly lit restaurant. Traditional jobs for people with Asperger's are in quiet settings with little social interaction required. Matt had a few words to say about that, "Do not by any means look up your symptoms, to see what type of job you should get. Don't pay any attention to that. You will seriously limit yourself. Only go with what you want to do. You'll learn talents you never even knew you had."

After two years of washing dishes, Matt was ready to move on. He noted, "Odds are your first job will not be the one you really want." Matt now works in the family business, Higgins Heating Service and Oil Delivery. He assists with furnace installation and maintenance. Matt doesn't see himself working here for the long term. Currently a part-time student at Keene State College, Matt is looking into a variety of career options.



Matt Higgins inspects a furnace that he recently installed.

EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

Adrienne Mallinson, Esq., Disabilities Rights Center

You have the right to be free from discrimination in the workplace. It is illegal for employers to discriminate against you on the grounds that you or a family member has a mental or physical disability.¹ These rights are guaranteed by New Hampshire state law RSA 354-A, and the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

RSA 354-A, New Hampshire's law against discrimination, enables you to file a complaint with the New Hampshire Human Rights Commission if you experience workplace discrimination. The law prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability by employers who have 6 or more employees (full- or part-time; temporary or permanent). It includes private employers and state and local government agencies, but excludes social clubs, religious organizations, and many other nonprofits.

Title I of the ADA prohibits workplace discrimination by employers with 15 or more employees, and covers all private businesses, staffing agencies, and state and local governments, as well as nonprofit and religious organizations.² The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) handles complaints involving ADA violations.

These and other civil rights laws apply to all aspects of employment, from hiring to firing. Especially critical are ADA provisions requiring employers to provide reasonable accommodations and banning discrimination if your family member has a disability. (Please note ADA protections, including requirement of accommodations, are only available to job applicants or workers in organizations with more than 15 employees.)

APPLYING FOR A JOB

- ◆ Employers may not ask you illegal questions. For example, an employer cannot ask you about your disability, your health or medications, or whether

you have been in the hospital, sick, or injured on the job. If you are asked these questions on an application form, leave it blank. If you are in an interview, you should tell the employer that you do not answer questions about private matters, but that you are happy to discuss your qualifications. If you have taken time away from the workplace because of a disability, just say, "I took time off from work to handle a private matter." Employers cannot ask you to undergo a medical examination (except for drug testing) before offering you a job.

- ◆ Employers need to provide reasonable accommodations for the interview, as long as the accommodation does not cause the employer an undue hardship. For example, an employer must provide accessible locations for interviews and tests, accessible materials, and test modifications.
- ◆ As long as you are qualified and can perform the essential functions of the job, with or without "reasonable accommodations," employers may not refuse to hire you just because of your disability. (But employers do not have to hire you; the laws do not guarantee a job and employers are entitled to choose a better qualified person.) In addition, employers may not refuse to hire you because someone you are close to has a disability – for example, in the mistaken belief that you might spend too much time away from work or because an employer is worried about a "negative" image.

GETTING A JOB OFFER

- ◆ After you get a job offer, but before you start work, your employer can ask you for medical information and require a physical exam, but only if they require it of all new employees. Even if you have a medical exam, employers cannot use it to exclude you from the job if you can perform the essential functions, either with or without reasonable accommodations.

¹ Note that not all disabilities are covered under the ADA or RSA 354-A, only where there is a "substantial impairment to a major life activity," such as hearing, seeing, speaking, walking, breathing, self-care, learning or working.

² It does not apply to the U.S. government: federal employees may instead be protected by the Rehabilitation Act and the Civil Service Reform Act. Different procedural rules apply – federal workers only have 45 days to file a complaint. Call the Disabilities Rights Center, 603-228-0432, for more information.

- ◆ It is illegal discrimination if your employer offers you different pay or benefits from other employees just because of your disability.

KEEPING YOUR JOB

- ◆ You do not have to tell your employer about your disability after you get the job unless you need assistance, or "reasonable accommodations." If you do need assistance, put it in writing. If your employer agrees to provide a job accommodation, make sure that also is in writing, or keep your own record by sending a thank you note. Your employer can refuse to make accommodations only if your request is much too expensive or burdensome, or if you are no longer able to perform essential aspects of the job, even with assistance.
- ◆ All sorts of accommodations are possible and reasonable. Some common examples that employers provide include: modified work schedules, job restructuring, accessible work space, assistive technology, modified training materials, and reassignment to a vacant position.
- ◆ You have a right to equal opportunity for job assignments, promotions, and training. You also have a right to equal benefits and health insurance if you or your family member has a disability. If your dependent has

a disability, your employer may not single you out and refuse, reduce, or terminate coverage.

- ◆ Employers may not retaliate against you for asserting your rights under state and federal law, or harass you for having a disability. Retaliation and harassment are forms of discrimination and you have the right to take action.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE BEEN DISCRIMINATED AGAINST

- ◆ Don't wait! You must file a complaint within 180 days of the date when you were discriminated against. You do not need a lawyer to make a complaint and you do not have to wait until you have quit or lost your job.
- ◆ Contact either the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) or the New Hampshire Commission on Human Rights for instructions.
- ◆ EEOC, John F. Kennedy Federal Building, 475 Government Center, Boston, MA 02203; Phone 1-800-669-4000; <http://www.eeoc.gov>.
- ◆ New Hampshire Commission for Human Rights, 2 Chenell Drive, Concord, NH 03301; Phone 603-271-2767; <http://www.state.nh.us/hrc/>.
- ◆ Additional information and resources available at <http://www.drcnh.org/Issue%20Areas/Empdiscrim.htm> and <http://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/fact/laws.htm>.

Wanted: Accommodations

Julia Freeman-Woolpert, Disabilities Rights Center

In the ten years that Cassandre Durand has worked in the retail clothing business, she has learned a great deal about merchandising, management, and supervision. One thing she never expected to learn, however, was how to file a complaint against her employer for discrimination.

Cassandre loves working in fashion retail, and she's good at it. Because she has low vision Cassandre needs minor accommodations to do her job – a hand-held magnifier with a light, clip-on bifocals, and a computer with a text-enlarging program and a low vision keyboard. Occasionally, she asks a coworker to read the tiniest print on a label.

In September 2004, Cassandre went to work for the J. Jill Company, a national women's clothing chain with a store in Concord's Steeplegate Mall. Almost immediately Cassandre had problems with her supervisor. Her boss was impatient and irritated that Cassandre needed to use a computer text program. If a problem arose at the store, the supervisor blamed it on Cassandre's vision. When Cassandre tried to talk with her supervisor about the situation, she was told that she was incompetent and incapable of performing her job due to her vision. Cassandre later learned from other employees that the super-

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visor had been making fun of her and encouraging them to do the same. The supervisor joked that Cassandre wasn't able to see customers and mockingly imitated her standing close to the computer screen.

In an attempt to resolve the problems with her supervisor, Cassandre met with J. Jill's Human Resource Representative. Rather than looking into the matter, the representative shrugged off the incidents, saying there was nothing she could do. While the representative informed the supervisor that Cassandre had filed a complaint, those who had witnessed the discriminatory treatment were never interviewed. Receiving no help from her company, Cassandre contacted a lawyer and filed a complaint with the Human Rights Commission.

In the spring of 2005, the supervisor left J. Jill for another job. Cassandre, well qualified to take over supervisory duties, asked to be promoted. Rather than granting her the promotion, the company appointed Cassandre acting supervisor. During her three months in this position Cassandre recruited, hired, and trained several new salespeople. She scored Very Good to Excellent on the company's performance guidelines.

In August 2005, shortly after the Human Rights Commission contacted J. Jill as part of the complaint investigation process, Cassandre was demoted to "co-manager." The pattern of discriminatory treatment and refusal to make accommodations has continued under a new supervisor. Ignoring Cassandre's need to keep her magnifier nearby, the supervisor issued an order that nothing could be placed on the work counter except the telephone. Cassandre's case is under investigation by the state's Human Rights Commission.



Cassandre Durand checks out a shop on Main Street.

The New Hampshire Human Rights Commission is a state agency. The purpose of the Commission is described under state law as "eliminating discrimination in employment, public accommodations and the sale or rental of housing or commercial property, because of age, sex, sexual orientation, race, religious creed, color, marital status, familial status, physical or mental disability or national origin." The Commission receives and investigates complaints of discrimination; the agency can be reached at (603) 271-2055 or online at <http://www.state.nh.us/brc/>.





Employment for Persons with Developmental Disabilities in New Hampshire: *A mixed review with troubling trends*

Gordon Allen, Executive Director, New Hampshire Developmental Disabilities Council

A review of how well New Hampshire citizens with developmental disabilities have been faring in the job market and been given the job supports they need over the last five years offers up mixed results. Overall, the Granite State seems to be hanging on to past gains rather than forging ahead, and there are some disturbing trends in declining expectations for employment and the quality and skills of support staff that threaten to move us backwards.

First a caveat. Because of data limitations, even this brief review relies primarily on soft data such as small case studies and anecdotal information. This is because solid statewide data on annual employment outcomes and the quality of employment supports is limited.

For working-age persons with disabilities, the employment data shows New Hampshire is at a critical turning point and, depending on your vantage point, the glass is either “half empty” or “half full.” On the positive side, the MEAD Medicaid buy-in program has been successful; in the five years since it began, more than 1,200 persons with disabilities have enrolled and the per-person and total wages have risen every year. On the negative side, even though there are few hard numbers, it is clear that there has been little or no growth in employment, wages, and good paying jobs for persons with significant disabilities, with the only growth being in volunteer jobs. Overall, the unemployment and underemployment rates for workers with disabilities are not falling, as they are for other New Hampshire workers. Unemployment is far greater – over 80% for those receiving SSI compared to 4% statewide – than for other segments of the labor force. With any other group this would be front-page news, and it would be for workers with disabilities if they did not have support from SSI and other programs to provide subsistence incomes.

We are also losing ground in providing adequate supports and services for New Hampshire workers with significant disabilities. Disturbing negative trends include a decline in the quality of staff and the capacity of our systems to provide employment support, continued difficulties in making successful transitions from high school to the job market, and evidence of declining expectations for employment. If these trends continue unchecked, they will almost certainly wipe out employment gains made in the recent past.

The future of supports, although troubling, is not completely bleak, and there are many positive developments with potential. These include the rapid advancement in Web-based career assessment and training tools, significant advances in assistive technology, more agreement on the specific employment supports needed to succeed, and a willingness of employers to hire people with disabilities even in a more challenging job market. Unfortunately, it is almost impossible to take advantage of these positive developments if the negative trends continue. These trends deserve a closer look.

Declining Expectations: A strong work ethic and the expectation that competitive employment is part of adult life are essential to success in the job market for all workers, and especially for those with disabilities. We have made great strides in raising the expectation for employment from zero –

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at a time when many of our citizens with disabilities lived in institutions and did not attend school – to the expectation that, with the proper supports, they are fully able to participate in the workplace and hold down real jobs. There is evidence that for a wide variety of reasons – ranging from waiting lists, low morale of support staff, loss of manufacturing jobs, and increased multitasking requirements for the new jobs replacing them – expectations for what workers with disabilities can achieve have peaked and are beginning to decline. This is disastrous to employment efforts, and unless we can regain the “fire in the belly” in pushing for full participation and real jobs, we are in trouble.

Fortunately, there are promising developments that can raise expectations. These include: 1) a growing number of workers with disabilities who have “made it” in a variety of occupations and provide powerful role models, 2) increased opportunities for post-secondary education, 3) advances in Web-based career programs and assistive technology that open up whole new worlds of employment possibilities, 4) successful parent leadership programs run by the Institute on Disability and the Parent Information Center, 5) the MEAD program, and 6) a willingness by the majority of New Hampshire employers, as expressed in a recent survey, to employ workers with disabilities if given the proper support.

Decline in Skilled Employment Support Staff: Our state is experiencing a significant decline in qualified staff who possess the multiple skills needed to support workers with disabilities in finding and keeping real jobs. The primary reason for this is that over the last five years, the increase in funds for developmental services has not kept up with inflation or with the increase in persons served – a situation shared by the mental health and vocational rehabilitation systems. This has resulted in stagnant wages, lower benefits, lowered standards for new hires, high vacancy rates, and annual staff turnover rates close to 50%. While a core of skilled staff remains, the quality, quantity, and effectiveness of employment support clearly has declined resulting in lost opportunities and lost jobs.

Difficulties in Transitioning from High School to Jobs: The past five years have seen a 35% increase in the number of high school youth with disabilities transitioning to adult life. Too frequently, New Hampshire’s education and adult systems have failed to provide the integrated supports and services to youth, families, and employers needed to maximize the chances of successful transitions. Effective collaboration during transition is critical to employment success and failure to do so often results in long-term negative consequences for employment. There has been progress in developing transition manuals, resource directories, and working agreements to help youth and families maneuver the service maze, but overall, the maze is still daunting. To solve this problem, the Workforce Opportunity Council and the New Hampshire Developmental Disabilities Council are piloting a project in four regions in the state. The project has developed regional intermediary organizations that are collaborations of all transition stakeholders and whose purpose is to integrate all essential employment supports. This approach is proving successful and could create a permanent solution without having to change the underlying support and service systems.

In sum, the glass is arguably both “half full” and “half empty” when it comes to employment for people with developmental disabilities in New Hampshire. But what is not arguable is that for New Hampshire to regain its momentum in this crucial area, dangerous trends must be reversed and the “fire in the belly” for full participation in the workforce must be re-stoked.

Career Assessment Resources

Charles Robinson, Ed. D., CRC, Consultant in
Careers and Rehabilitation

A career assessment is designed to obtain information about an individual across three broad areas: 1) preferences, 2) behavior, and 3) knowledge, skills, and abilities. Formal testing, observation, interviews, and self-assessment or assessment by others can all be included in a career assessment. A thorough career assessment also will include information obtained from observation during real or simulated work.

The following short – and by no means complete – list of free Internet sites can help you begin the process of exploring two areas: preferences and knowledge, skills, and abilities. All sites require reading; for some individuals a screen reader may be needed. Screen readers are available through www.readplease.com and www.awesome-library.org.

PREFERENCES

www.cdm.uwaterloo.ca/step1.asp offers self-ratings in preferences, values, skills, interests, knowledge, and even decision-making.

www.mapping-your-future.org contains a range of self-rating tools for students from middle school through high school and college. The site also includes information about educational options and financial assistance.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, ABILITIES

Computer Literacy:

www.jegsworks.com/Lessons/web/index.html

www.gcflearnfree.org/

Learning Styles:

www.engr.ncsu.edu/learningstyles/ilsweb.html

www.as.wvu.edu/coll03/phys/www/rotter/phys201/1_Habits_of_the_Mind/Learning_Styles.html

Skill Assessment:

Here are just four of the many sites that can help in the assessment of both an individual's technical knowledge and academic skills.

www.measureup.towes.com/english/index.asp

www.brainbench.com/xml/bb/common/testcenter/freetests.xmlb

www.highschoolace.com

www.khake.com

Questions? Contact CRobinson@askdrcharlie.com

Moving On

Julia Freeman-Woolpert, Disabilities Rights Center

In spring of 2003 Tim Weeks was in an automobile accident that injured his spinal cord, paralyzing his legs. It took Tim awhile to recover from his accident enough to work, but in July 2005, Tim landed a full time job at Teleflex Medical in Jaffrey. Services from Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) helped to make it possible.

In order to even get to work, Tim needed accessible transportation. VR paid to equip his truck with hand controls and a lift to hoist his chair onto the truck bed. As a 20 year old, Tim is fairly new to the job market. VR arranged for ACCESS to coach Tim on job finding skills – resume, applications, interviewing. Tim took it from there. He applied to Teleflex Medical and was hired to do quality control of the medical tubing produced by Teleflex. Tim likes working for the company; as he gets more experience on the job he hopes to move into equipment operation and maintenance.



Tim Weeks lifts his wheelchair into his truck.

Teleflex was willing to make accommodations for Tim. The company rearranged equipment to make room for Tim to navigate in his wheelchair. It turned out the workspace was already wide enough, and the equipment was moved back. Teleflex was ready to make other accommodations, but none were necessary.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR): What are the Facts?

Julia Freeman-Woolpert, Disabilities Rights Center, and Bill Hagy, Client Assistance Program, Governor's Commission on Disability

If you have a disability and are seeking employment, the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) should be one of the tools in your toolkit. VR can provide a wide array of services to help you develop and reach your employment objectives, and maximize your employability. In order to take full advantage of the resources available through VR, it will help to know more about the agency. We hope that the following questions and answers will help you advocate for the VR services you need to become successfully employed.

DOES VR ASSIST PEOPLE WITH SEVERE DISABILITIES? Yes, VR must assist *all* eligible individuals.¹ The eligibility criteria require that the individual be able to benefit from VR services "in terms of an employment outcome."² Before VR can determine a person is too severely disabled to benefit from VR services, it must "conduct an exploration of the individual's abilities, capabilities, and capacity to perform in realistic work situations." This exploration can include trial work experiences, with the provision of assistive technology devices and services and personal assistance services, and if necessary, an extended evaluation for as long as necessary to determine whether the person can benefit in terms of an employment outcome.³

WHAT IS AN INDIVIDUALIZED PLAN FOR EMPLOYMENT (IPE)? The IPE is a written plan that sets forth the employment outcome chosen by the individual consistent with his or her abilities and interests. The IPE describes the services the person needs to achieve the employment outcome, and includes timelines for achieving the outcome. Federal regulations require VR to "look beyond options in entry-level employment for VR program participants who are capable of more challenging work." It should include who is responsible for what, including costs of services, if any. The IPE can be developed in several different ways, including with or without assistance from VR.⁴

WHAT CAN VR PROVIDE TO HELP ME BECOME EMPLOYED? VR can provide or fund a wide a variety of services and supports to help a person develop job skills, get a job, keep a job, or regain a job. These include, but are not limited to: assessment, counseling, assistive technology, personal assistance services, transportation, post-employment services, interpreter services, orientation and mobility services, home modification, driver education, physical and mental restoration services, services to family members, tools, equipment, start-up stocks for businesses, and technical assistance to conduct market analyses or develop business plans.⁵

CAN VR PROVIDE TRANSPORTATION? Yes. VR can pay for travel and related expenses in connection with their services. It is currently New Hampshire VR policy not to purchase vans, but VR will pay for vehicle modifications if those modifications are needed to reach your employment goal.⁶ VR has set cost limits on modifications, which can be waived based on a variety of factors.⁷

CAN VR PROVIDE DRIVER'S EDUCATION? Yes. VR can provide driver evaluation or training if it supports the employment goal in your plan.

CAN VR PAY FOR BASIC EDUCATION? Yes, if it supports the employment goal in your plan.

¹ In the event that the state determines it has insufficient resources to meet the demand for VR services, it can establish an order of selection for services. In this event people with a most significant disability would be priority one. New Hampshire has not had such an order within recent memory.

² Policy Manual, p. 13, section 4.2 (b)

³ ED 1010.07 et seq.

⁴ NH Vocational Rehabilitation Policy Manual, rev. May 1, 2005, p. 20, section 7.2

⁵ ED1010.15

⁶ The Code of Federal Regulations, 34 CFR 361.5(b)(57)(i), Ex. 2, that covers the VR rules, might require New Hampshire VR to purchase a van in certain situations.

⁷ Policy Manual, p. 29, section 9.4.12b.

⁸ 34 CFR Part 361.5(b)(39)

⁹ Policy Manual, p. 24, section 9.4.4.2

CAN VR PAY FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT OR EQUIPMENT? Yes, if these are needed to help you reach your employment objective. These can include glasses, hearing aids, psychiatric treatment and medications, prostheses and orthoses, dental services, corrective surgery, and other medical services. VR has financial limits on some of these items, but in certain situations these may be waived. VR will ask you to use other benefits (insurance) to pay for medical services before it will assume the cost.

CAN VR PAY FOR PERSONAL ASSISTANCE SERVICES? Yes. VR can provide personal assistance services if they are necessary for you to achieve an employment outcome, and only while you are receiving other VR services.⁸ These are services that provide assistance with daily living activities that if you did not have a disability you would do independently. The services must be designed to increase your ability to perform everyday activities on or off the job.

CAN VR HELP ME START A SMALL BUSINESS? Yes. VR can provide consultation, technical assistance, and other resources to help you start a business. VR also can help you purchase tools, equipment, licenses, and initial stocks and supplies.

CAN VR PAY FOR COLLEGE OR GRADUATE SCHOOL? Yes, if it is "necessary to achieve a vocational goal consistent with an individual's capacities, abilities, and choices."⁹ Under current VR policy, tuition help for graduate school requires the approval of the Director of VR or the Director's designee. There are also certain limits on how much VR will pay for postsecondary education, but there are numerous exceptions to these limits.

What is the Client Assistance Program (CAP)?

The Client Assistance Program (CAP) is an advocacy program for persons with disabilities who are applicants or clients of VR or Independent Living (IL) programs. CAP also provides information on the Americans with Disabilities Act of Title I of the ADA. CAP provides information and advice about problems with VR or IL programs. CAP can investigate your complaint, help resolve problems, and represent you at administrative reviews and fair hearings. Contact CAP at 1-800-852-3405 (V/TTY). All CAP services are free. Links to VR rules and agencies are available on the DRC website at: <http://www.drcnh.org/VR.htm>.

AFTER I AM EMPLOYED, CAN VR STILL PROVIDE SERVICES IF I NEED THEM? Yes. VR can provide post-employment services if they are needed to maintain, regain, or advance in suitable employment.

HOW LONG CAN VR SERVICES LAST? Services can last until either the person has been determined, based on clear and convincing evidence, to be incapable of benefiting from VR services, or the person has achieved their employment outcome. The IPE will contain timelines for achievement of the employment outcome and for the initiation of services.

CAN VR DECIDE NOT TO PROVIDE CERTAIN SERVICES IF THEY ARE AVAILABLE ELSEWHERE? Yes. VR may require you to obtain comparable services if they are available elsewhere. However, there are exemptions to this comparable benefits rule. Moreover, if your employment outcome or job placement would be interrupted or delayed, or if you are at extreme medical risk, VR may *not* withhold their services while determining the availability of comparable services.

WILL I HAVE TO PAY FOR ANY OF MY SERVICES THROUGH VR? Maybe. VR may require you to contribute to certain services if you are financially able to, based on a financial needs test. However, VR cannot require you to pay for a number of services including: assessment, counseling, guidance, interpreter or reader services, personal assistance services, and certain job-related services. If you receive Social Security or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits, you are not required to pay for any of your VR services.

IF VR SAYS NO, IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO? Yes. If you are dissatisfied with any decision VR has made in your case, such as an eligibility decision, a decision that you cannot benefit from VR services, or a decision not to provide a given service, there are several avenues you can pursue to get a reconsideration of a decision. The state's rules provide for administrative reviews, mediation, and hearings. The Client Assistance Program at the Governor's Commission on Disability, or the Disabilities Rights Center, can tell you more about your options.

Access to Employment

JoAnne Malloy, MSW, Project Coordinator, Institute on Disability; Tobey Davies, MS, Director, Southern NH University Center for Community Economic Development and Disability; and Sheila Lambert, CRC Administrator, New Hampshire Vocational Rehabilitation

Most young people look forward to a career that will be personally rewarding and allow them to be self-sufficient. High school students are taught that hard work and academic achievement will help them get into college and obtain good-paying jobs. Most employed adults believe that if they work hard at their jobs they will have opportunities for promotions or be able to secure a better position elsewhere.

Thirty years ago the independent living movement created a vision that workers with disabilities could share in these expectations and enjoy full access to vocational and career opportunities. Revisions to the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, improved access to competitive employment and increased supports for individuals with disabilities to pursue careers. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (P. L. 101-336) formalized the right of people with disabilities to have equal access to employment and supports in the workplace. The 1999 Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act (TWWIIA) included significant public policy improvements in access to community-based health care (Medicare and Medicaid), public benefits, and vocational services for individuals with disabilities who are employed or who are actively seeking employment. While these laws are important milestones, the achievement of full community inclusion remains a work in progress. Unfortunately, for too many youth and adults with disabilities, expectations for economic self-sufficiency and competitive employment are constrained by attitudinal, physical, social, and policy barriers.

Employment Rates "Hit a Wall"

Despite three decades of policy and program developments designed to help individuals with disabilities to attain competitive employment (including the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and IDEA), the rate of employment among people with disabilities has stagnated. According to the 2001 U.S. Census data, only 29.4% of people with disabilities are in the labor force as compared with an 82.1% participation rate among people without disabilities. The unemployment

rate of individuals with disabilities is more than double that of individuals without disabilities and, while 65% of workers without disabilities work full time, only 18% of workers with disabilities do so. In addition, while the number of people with disabilities attending college has increased, most youth with disabilities do not continue their education beyond high school. For the vast majority of individuals with disabilities, their transition into adulthood means an increased reliance on public disability benefit programs. The move to develop community-based vocational services begun in the 1980's has abated and, in fact, has declined significantly in New Hampshire and across the nation.

The Landscape Today

Finding employment is influenced by a combination of factors including previous work experiences, education, personal connections, and timing. Vocational supports for individuals with disabilities are intended to improve the degree to which individuals are able to obtain and maintain employment in their fields of interest. These services may include pre-employment planning, job development assistance, job training, and ongoing supports and services for those who are eligible. Public schools, private and not for profit employment agencies, New Hampshire's Vocational Rehabilitation agency, and the state's One Stop system all provide services to help individuals with disabilities find work and move into careers.

With funding from the state's Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) and other TWWIIA-related programs, New Hampshire is working to develop a stronger vocational service infrastructure for people with disabilities. These improvements include the Medicaid for Employed Adults with Disabilities Program and the statewide Benefits Planning, Assistance, and Outreach service provided by Granite State Independent Living. The state also is working to improve access to personal assistance services necessary for employment and is supporting research and training activities to help guide the development of an effective employment infrastructure.

What People with Disabilities Say

In the fall of 2004 several meetings were hosted by Southern New Hampshire University's Center for Community Economic Development and Disability to learn more about how best to support New Hampshire's workers with disabilities. Meetings included participation from people who are blind or visually impaired, people who are deaf or hard of hearing, people with physical disabilities, people who experience mental illness, and people who experience developmental disabilities. The following themes emerged from these discussions.

- ◆ *Quality of the Work Environment:* Participants stated that salary was only one factor in determining job satisfaction. Work environments that foster interpersonal relationships, promote social acceptance, practice open communication, and provide continuity of accommodations and supports are critical to successful employment and job satisfaction.
- ◆ *Opportunities in the Workforce:* Participants reported that they experienced limitations in the types of jobs, the range of occupations, and their opportunities for advancement. For most, movement in the workforce was lateral, not upward, with limited opportunities for increased wages and status.
- ◆ *Success in the Workplace:* People cited on-the-job training as the best method for learning employment responsibilities. Other factors critical to success in the workplace included: coworker acceptance, knowledge of legal rights and the ability to self-advocate, adequate benefits, assistive technology, and the continuity of accommodations and supports.
- ◆ *Vocational Service and Support Providers:* Worker satisfaction with community providers and the state's Vocational Rehabilitation program was mixed. Participants cited the need for a higher qualified and more responsive vocational service workforce that could work proactively with businesses on job development. Participants also reported that the temporary nature of Vocational Rehabilitation services makes it difficult for them to access needed services to retain their job or to foster career mobility within a workplace or industry.

In addition, participants reported that the following factors affected their ability to seek and retain employment:

- ◆ Access to and availability of adequate and accessible transportation;
- ◆ Fear of job loss and lack of a financial safety net;
- ◆ Loss of needed health care benefits;
- ◆ Erosion of self confidence by unwelcoming or hostile work environments;
- ◆ Difficulties simultaneously balancing the multiple demands of family, education, training, employment, and other personal issues (such as recovery);
- ◆ Inadequate resources for interpreter and/or CART services for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, as well as for people who do not speak English. (Several individuals who are deaf reported that the lack of these services prevents them from fully participating in typical workplace activities such as staff meetings and day-to-day interactions with coworkers. They also said they often feel guilty about the cost of accommodations born by their employers.)

Conclusion

The vision of full access to competitive employment and career opportunities for people with disabilities remains unfulfilled. What is needed is a new framework for the development and provision of vocational services. This framework should include retooling the strategies and skills used by vocational providers to ensure that individuals with disabilities are able to achieve more significant levels of employment. Effective partnerships are needed between the disability community and employers, so that jobs – including benefits, accommodations, and supports – are fully accessible to workers with various types of disabilities. New mechanisms for funding should be developed, including public and private alliances that allow for community-based rehabilitation supports for individual workers. In moving forward with these efforts, New Hampshire citizens with disabilities must be included as full partners.

Realizing the Promise of Customized Employment

David Hagner, Ph.D., Research Professor, Institute on Disability

All of us seek to find ways to use our talents and abilities and contribute to our community in valued ways. For adults, this typically includes employment. Adults with disabilities have the same desire to contribute, to feel a sense of purpose, and to enjoy spending earned income as other citizens. Proven and well-established strategies are available to assist individuals with any type or degree of disability to obtain employment. The U. S. Department of Labor uses the term “customized employment” to describe some of the most important of these strategies.

“Customized employment” refers to employment that is designed to fit the needs and abilities of the employee as well as the employer. This goes beyond filling an opening in a pre-established position; it also may involve an individually negotiated set of work tasks and job supports. For individuals with significant disabilities, such negotiations typically are accomplished with the assistance of a job developer or employment specialist from an employment service provider or the employment services department of an organization such as an area agency. Three considerations are critical to establishing a customized job. Individuals considering employment should be careful to select a provider with staff experienced and skilled in these areas.

✓ Established Relationships and Involvement with the Business Community

One indicator of this involvement is the provider’s active membership in community business associations. An employment service provider should be able to provide a list of references of businesses with whom they have successfully worked.

Customizing a job is more than merely responding to job openings. Providers must be skilled at making business proposals that include such things as carving out new positions or reconfiguring job tasks. Jason, for example, has a job in a car dealership printing out and mailing notices to car owners reminding them to schedule upcoming maintenance. A job developer who knew Jason’s talents and what he was looking for in a job approached the dealership and worked with them to identify a task that filled an important employer need. A proven track record and referrals from one business to another, allow service providers to develop relationships with local employers that lead to customized arrangements of this kind.

A REAL CAREER

David Hagner, Ph.D. Research Assistant Professor, University of New Hampshire
Cathy Dowd, Service Coordinator, Region VIII Community Developmental Services

Chris Wright, now 26, knew even as a teenager that he wanted to be a chef. His high school education included both academic classes at Woodsville High School and hands-on training in the culinary arts program at Riverbend Vocational School in Vermont. As graduation approached, Chris expressed his desire to continue his culinary training at the New England Culinary Institute (NECI) in Montpelier, Vermont.

A team that included members of the school’s

special education program, the Area Agency, Common Ground (the developmental services program in Littleton), and the local Vocational Rehabilitation office came together to help Chris make this transition. Chris and his special education teacher made several trips to NECI, starting the November before graduation. “I knew he could do it, and I wanted them to see him,” his teacher explained. Instructors at the Culinary Institute recognized that Chris was eager to

✓ Expertise in Facilitating Natural Supports

Employment provider staff must have demonstrated expertise not only in teaching job tasks to individuals with disabilities, but also in working with supervisors and coworkers to ensure that they are able to support the employee. Supports provided by the employer and coworkers - often as a result of facilitation and consulting by provider staff - are known as "natural supports." For example, Sarah who has a job cleaning at a restaurant needs assistance whenever her routine is disrupted for a special catered event. Her supervisor is aware of the need to sit down and explain the change to Sarah at the beginning of her shift.

Employment staff also must be skilled in helping an employee to build coworker relationships and to learn how to fit into the workplace, things like how to interact during the coffee break or how and when to ask for assistance and return favors. Brenda, for example, received assistance in learning how to dress stylishly to fit in with her coworkers. She also learned to take her turn bringing in baked goods for the morning break.

✓ A Collaborative Relationship with Consumers and Their Families

Collaboration with families often includes familiarity with person-centered planning and enlisting the individual's network of family and friends to help develop goals and implement plans. Collaboration between families and service providers also is important to ensure that employees are able to realize the benefits of earned income. None of us would take our jobs seriously if our quality of life remained the same whether we worked or not. Sean, for example, enjoys going out to dinner with his family on the weekend. His parents help Sean cash his paycheck and put money aside to pay for his dinner. One morning, Sean was playing a video game after breakfast, and refused to put it down when it was time to leave for work. Sean's next paycheck reflected a decrease. The family had dinner at home that weekend instead of going out. The following Monday morning, Sean was dressed and ready to go to work an hour early.

The strategies for successfully facilitating employment for individuals with disabilities are widely known and straightforward. No one should be denied the opportunity to work and earn income at an individualized community job because they have a developmental disability. Training, assistance, and materials related to customized employment are available from a variety of sources, including the Institute on Disability at the University of New Hampshire.



SARAH BUCKOVITCH, PHOTOGRAPHER

Mount Washington Hotel Chef Chris Wright

attend, but they weren't sure if he was ready. They recommended that he get a year of restaurant work under his belt before he applied. With help from his employment service coordinator Chris found a job at Monroe's Family Restaurant. At the end of the year, he applied to the NECI and was accepted. Vocational Rehabilitation provided tuition assistance and the Area Agency helped work out the personal supports Chris needed.

The Culinary Institute's basic certificate program includes 15 weeks of instruction in residence, followed by six

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months of internship. Chris divided his internship between restaurants in Vero Beach, Florida and New Hampshire. Having an internship away from home not only provided Chris an opportunity to live in another part of the country, his teacher noted that, "It gave him a great deal of confidence."

Following his training, Chris landed a job as a prep cook at the Ski Lodge at Bretton Woods in Bartlett, New Hampshire. For three years he worked at Bretton Woods during the busy ski season and at the Mount Washington Hotel in the summer. The same company owns both facilities, but because the two restaurants are run differently, making the seasonal change was often difficult for Chris. Recently, in consultation with his employment specialist, Chris has decided to stay at the hotel year-round. Chris works in the hotel's employee cafeteria; he gets

along well with his coworkers and receives positive performance evaluations. As his former teacher put it, "I know a lot of students who have jobs, but he's got a real career."

Chris' personal determination has helped him achieve other milestones as well. With his employment service coordinator tutoring him on the written portion of the exam, Chris passed the test for his driver's license and recently purchased a vehicle. Chris' ultimate goal is to be a chef and own his own restaurant. He is saving money to enroll in the Culinary Institute's advanced, two-year program. Chris offers the following advice for young people who are starting to think about a career. "If you have an idea, go after it, and stick with it." He also recommends trying something out first to see if it is right. "If you don't like it, at least you tried it."

Finding the Right Fit

Julia Freeman-Woolpert, Disabilities Rights Center

I met up with Martin Burrell in downtown Keene. As we headed over to the YMCA where he works, he let me know he was a fast walker and I could never keep up with him. He was right – I followed him at a fast trot and watched his back the whole time.

Once I caught my breath, we had a whirlwind tour of the Y. Martin is enthusiastic about his job as a half time custodian. I learned about every room and how it gets cleaned, toured the maintenance office, checked out the time card machine, and went up and down the numerous stairways in the building, several times.

Now 27 years old, working at the Y is Martin's first real job. His only prior experience was dishwashing at a day care center a few hours a week with one-on-one supervision. John Vance of ACCESS who helped set up the job at the Y said Martin is not a worker who needs one-on-one supervision. He noted that many human services agencies are over protective when it comes to workers with disabilities. As the YMCA's custodian, Martin works with minimal supervision and two nights a week he's there alone. At first, Martin was a little scared about working alone in the building, but he decided to give it a try and found he could do it – no problem.

When John was helping Martin find a job, he began by thinking about the people he knew who might like Martin. "A lot of it is about relationship developing," he explained. Martin has a lot of energy and he can be loud, sometimes very loud, enough to bother some people. John thought Butch Wyman, the head custodian at the Y, would get along well with Martin. Butch is a no-nonsense guy who can get a little loud himself. Butch and Martin turned out to be a great match.

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Workforce Development for Individuals with Disabilities

Susan Fox, M.S.Ed., Institute on Disability; JoAnne Malloy, MSW Institute on Disability

While New Hampshire was once a national leader in employment outcomes for persons with disabilities, the 1990's have seen a decline in the employment rate for persons with disabilities. Over the past five years New Hampshire has received help through federal legislation to address employment issues. Passed by Congress in 1999, the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act, or TWWIIA, is a comprehensive federal law assisting states to remove barriers to employment and to improve access to health care so that people with disabilities can fully participate in employment. For persons with disabilities returning to work, TWWIIA provisions increase allowable earnings and assets under Medicaid eligibility. Federal TWWIIA grant funding can assist states to create an infrastructure for benefits planning, assistance, and outreach service to counsel individuals with disabilities on the impact of earnings on their public benefits. Another component of the TWWIIA legislation is the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency program for qualified Social Security Administration beneficiaries who need assistance to return to work.

TWWIIA also created the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) an 11-year initiative managed by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) of the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. This program allows states to build and restructure their Medicaid systems to promote community-based employment supports, and to build community resources and systems to help individuals with disabilities to find and retain competitive jobs. The New Hampshire MIG, managed by the state's Office of Medicaid Business and Policy, has received funding through the MIG initiative since 2001.

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Martin Burrell (left) reviews the schedule for the week with his boss, Butch Wyman.

Martin's job "interview" was hands-on. He was paid to work alongside the other custodian, Joe Spears, for the weekend. The first night Joe showed him how to do the work. The second night, Martin worked while Joe looked on. This gave Martin a good idea about the job, and Joe a good idea about Martin's capabilities. Based on his performance, Martin got the job.

Butch, Joe, and Martin are the Y's custodial team. Butch watches out for Martin and troubleshoots problems. Occasionally Martin slacks off. Butch said when this happens, "I chew him out." Martin doesn't like to

be called in when he's not scheduled, but that's part of the job and in spite of complaining, he does it. For a while, Martin was asking to change his hours so he could be home by 11. There were arguments. Eventually Butch found out that one of Martin's favorite TV shows started at 11. Once he realized this, it was a simple matter to tape the show so Martin could watch it when he got home.

Butch is more than just Martin's boss; he's a fierce advocate for his employee. When a residential staff person came into the Y and said mean things about Martin, Butch was livid. He filed a complaint. It hasn't happened again.

Martin's outgoing, sociable nature has won him friends at work. However, there are a few people who don't fit well with Martin. Butch arranges their schedules so they won't have to work together. Martin still talks very loudly, loves to sing, and sometimes needs reminders to tone it down. His team enjoys working with him, "As long as he don't sing," said Butch. "He can't sing."

New Hampshire's Benefits Planning, Assistance and Outreach (BPAO) Program

Nellie Goron, Benefits Counseling Services Director, Granite State Independent Living

In 1999 the federal Social Security Administration, under the Ticket to Work and Work Incentive Improvement Act, established the Benefits Planning, Assistance, and Outreach Program (BPAO). The focus of the program is to assist people with disabilities to fully participate in all aspects of community life, including competitive employment. The program's primary goal is to establish a state-wide network of benefits counselors to provide training and public education and to deliver customer-friendly analysis of the impact of earned income on Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) cash benefits, related health care, and public benefits.

In New Hampshire, the BPAO Program is administered by Granite State Independent Living (GSIL). Currently, the program has four benefits specialists working throughout the state. BPAO staff are trained and certified in counseling on the full range of Social Security Administration benefits, including: Social Security Disability and Supplemental Security Income, Medicare and Medicaid, food stamps, and housing subsidies.

BPAO services are available to anyone between the ages of 16 to 64 who is receiving a SSI and/or SSDI cash payment. Ideally, this service is targeted to persons who are working or are considering work in the near future. BPAO staff provides both one-on-one counseling with individuals to discuss specific situations over an extended period and conducts presentations and workshops to large and small audiences.

Since the program's inception in November 2000, GSIL benefits specialists have assisted over 900 individuals in obtaining information on work incentives, benefits options, and options in health coverage. Many of these individuals have attained employment or successfully re-entered the workforce.

In January 2003 following its federal site visit, GSIL's program received an overall outstanding rating from the Social Security Administration. This rating places New Hampshire's program in the top 10 percent of all BPAO projects nationwide.

In New Hampshire the MIG program has done the following:

- ◆ Formed the Governor's Task Force on Employment and Economic Opportunity for Individuals with Disabilities. The Task Force has collaborated in writing grants for benefits counseling, accessibility, employment for high schools students, and other programs that have brought nearly \$3 million into the state.
- ◆ Established a Medicaid Buy-In program called Medicaid for Employed Adults with Disabilities (MEAD) to allow adults with disabilities to work and maintain Medicaid benefits.
- ◆ Assisted with the development of rule revisions for individuals on the Home and Community-Based Care for Elderly and Chronically Ill (HCBC-ECI) waiver to ensure greater consumer access to community-based services.
- ◆ Provided for education and outreach work incentives and benefits counseling services.
- ◆ Contracted for employment project initiatives that build provider capacity, workforce development, and enhance service delivery of employment services.
- ◆ Performed research and evaluation of the state's MEAD Program.

In order to continue to receive MIG funds beyond 2006, the state of New Hampshire must meet a federal requirement for widespread access to personal assistance services for individuals outside of the home. If New Hampshire meets this benchmark and continues to receive MIG funds, the final five years of the grant will provide funding for the state to focus on improving competitive employment opportunities and employment supports for individuals with disabilities.

Some ideas for future MIG sponsored development include:

- ◆ Training and technical support to community-based vocational providers so that individuals with disabilities obtain and are prepared for better-paying competitive jobs.
- ◆ Innovative employment programs to improve the employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

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- ◆ Pilot projects or infrastructure building, in specific areas such as workforce and asset development.
- ◆ Development of self-employment and small business models for individuals with disabilities.
- ◆ Development of relationships with employers and employment service providers so that individuals with disabilities can obtain better-paying jobs.
- ◆ Cost analyses and studies to develop the most

appropriate and effective way to offer incentives for community-based employment supports for people with disabilities.

- ◆ Study and revision of state policies that impose barriers to employment.

For more information about the MIG, contact Denise Bolduc-Musumeci, MIG Project Director at 271-7224 or e-mail: dbolduc-musumeci@dhhs.state.nh.us

Do People with Disabilities Ever Retire?

Linda B. Bimbo, Institute on Disability

My friend Margaret is sixty years old and a receptionist in a Concord office. When I asked her if she had thought about retirement, she replied, "Why would I want to retire? I've got it all, right here." For many older Americans, retirement means having the time to do what they want instead of going to work. It may mean taking up a new hobby or spending more time with family and friends. What does retirement mean for people with developmental disabilities? Do people with disabilities ever retire?

Today, there are approximately 641,000 US citizens age 60 and older with intellectual and other developmental disabilities. This number will double by 2030 when the Baby Boomers reach their sixties. Generally, the life expectancy and age-related medical issues for persons with developmental disabilities are similar to that of the general population, with some exceptions. Individuals with some conditions, including Down Syndrome, have an earlier onset of age-related changes. However, like most Americans, people with disabilities are living longer and reaching retirement age.

Given that many individuals with disabilities are unemployed, under-employed, or spend their days in sheltered environments, retirement has a different meaning than it does for those who have spent their adult years working for wages and can anticipate having retirement income. Scott has been a janitor for over 20 years with the same company. He now works part-time and considers himself semi-retired. Many of Scott's friends, however, have not had the opportunity to be competitively employed. For those in day programs or sheltered employment, the possibility of a financially comfortable retirement is remote.

While individuals in sheltered workshops remain isolated, supported employment or job coaching has helped many adults with developmental disabilities work in real jobs in their communities. Many of these older workers prefer to continue working for as long as possible, not so much because they like working, but because their jobs provide valued social supports. Margaret and Scott both have social lives that are tied directly to their places of employment. On breaks and over lunch they socialize with their co-workers. They have made friends on the job who they spend time with outside of work. They both say they would feel "lost" without these connections.

Older adults with disabilities who chose to retire should have the same access to community activities that are available to all senior citizens including: senior centers, companion programs, community recreational programs, adult education opportunities, and a wide variety of activities sponsored by faith-based organizations. Many agencies serving individuals with disabilities have recognized the need to create options for older adults. To be more responsive to individuals' needs and preferences, these agencies are adopting flexible schedules, making better use of volunteers, and coordinating with formal and informal community supports. In fact, compared to typical businesses, the developmental support system is better able to respond to the needs of older workers by offering shorter work days, a slower pace, and integration of leisure activities into the individual's day. In considering retirement, the key to success for *all* persons, including those with disabilities, is the individual's participation in planning for the future.

EMPLOYMENT RESOURCES

New Hampshire Resources:

The Disabilities Rights Center has a webpage with links to many employment-related and vocational rehabilitation resources: <http://www.drcnh.org/Issue%20Areas/Empdiscrim.htm>. The DRC provides information and advocacy concerning employment rights.

The Client Assistance Program at the Governor's Commission on Disability can provide information about VR services and your rights, and investigate complaints about VR services. (603) 271-4175; (800) 852-3405 voice or TTY. CAP has a guide to Vocational Rehabilitation Services on its website: <http://www.state.nh.us/disability/cap-homepage.html>.

The Institute on Disability has information on its website on community living and adult life, including developing business capacity to include employees with autism, and enhancing the transition to adult life through microboards: http://iod.unh.edu/projects/community_living.html

Granite State Independent Living: 21 Chenell Drive, Concord, NH 03301. (603) 228-9680, (800) 826-3700, 888/396-3459 (TTY). GSIL has a benefits planning program for people ready to work, and has information on MEAD (Medicaid for Employed Adults with Disabilities) on its website: <http://www.gsil.org/mead.php>. GSIL has satellite offices in Keene, Franconia, Manchester, and Nashua.

Center for Community Economic Development and Disability at Southern NH University. 2500 N. River Road, Manchester, NH, 03106, (603) 668-2211. The Center for Community Economic Development & Disability seeks to facilitate leveraging CED resources and expertise in the service of people with disabilities. Contact: Toby Davies, t.davies@snhu.edu

NH Department of Employment Security has information for job seekers and employers on its website: <http://www.nhes.state.nh.us/>

The NH Commission for Human Rights, 271-2055, <http://www.state.nh.us/hrc/>

NH Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, 21 South Fruit Street, Suite 20, Concord, NH 03301 (603) 271-3471(V/TTY) 1-800-339-9900. VR has seven regional offices around the state. <http://www.ed.state.nh.us/education/doe/organization/adultlearning/VR/VR.htm>

National Resources:

Job Accommodation Network, A free service of the Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor. JAN is a free consulting service designed to increase the employability of people with disabilities by: 1) providing individualized worksite accommodations solutions, 2) providing technical assistance regarding the ADA and other disability related legislation, and 3) educating callers about self-employment options. 800-526-7234 (V/TTY) <http://www.jan.wvu.edu/>

The Work Site, a program of the Social Security Administration, to promote employment. <http://www.ssa.gov/work/>

Ticket to Work website: <http://www.yourticketto work.com/>.

National Center on Workforce and Disability provides training, technical assistance, policy analysis, and information to improve access for all in the workforce development system. <http://www.one-stops.info/>

National Collaboration on Workforce and Disability for Youth assists state and local workforce development systems to better serve youth with disabilities. <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/>

Editor's Update on the 2005 Fall issue on Autism – The Child Development Clinic would like to be included as an Available Resource Related to Autism Spectrum Disorder. For children 0 - 7 from the Concord, Manchester, and Nashua areas, the Child Development Clinic provides comprehensive diagnostic evaluation, regardless of family income. To find out more about their services please call 603-606-5446 or visit their website at www.childhealthservices.org

EMPLOYMENT RESOURCES, CONTINUED

Virginia Commonwealth University's Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Workplace Supports and Job Retention: <http://www.work-support.com/>. Lots of webcasts and courses on employment strategies and how-tos.

Cornell University's Employment and Disability Institute has conducted a study that shows that the employment rate for people with disabilities has fallen and the poverty rate has risen. <http://www.news.cornell.edu/stories/Oct05/Disab.work.rpt.html>

Training and Technical Assistance for Providers: has information about customized employment, ac-

commodations for people with mental illnesses, self employment, and more: <http://www.t-tap.org>.

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which enforces federal laws prohibiting employment discrimination: (800) 669-4000 (voice), (800) 669-6820 (TTY). <http://www.eeoc.gov/>.

The US Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy: <http://www.dol.gov/odep/>.

Small Business Development and Self Employment resource center at the University of Arkansas: http://www.rcep6.org/resource_center/Employment/business_resources.htm

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WORKSHOPS INCLUDE:

Developing Social Competence: Reaching Out and Joining In

Presenter: Cathy Apfel, Institute on Disability/UCED, UNH and Granite State College

Braiding Resources for the Transition from School to Adult Life

Presenter: Joanne Malloy, MSW, Institute on Disability/UCED, UNH

Leadership for Inclusive Education: The Role of the Inclusion Facilitator in Supporting Best Practices for Students with Significant Developmental Disabilities

Presenter: Cheryl M. Jorgensen, PhD, Institute on Disability/UCED, UNH

"How do I fit Alternate Assessment into my daily teaching routine?"

Presenters: Elaine Dodge and Cathleen White Distinguished Educators, NH Alternate Assessment and Gayle Fedorchak, Alternate Assessment Coordinator, NH Department of Education

The Role of the Classroom Assistant in General Education Classrooms: Promoting Independence

Presenter: Frank Sgambati, Institute on Disability/UCED, UNH and Granite State College

Technology 101: The KIS (Keep it Simple) Method

Presenters: Therese Willkomm, Ph.D. ATP, Director of ATNH Project Institute on Disability/UCED UNH and Kirsten Behling, Universal Design Specialist, Institute for Community Inclusion, U Mass

Understanding Potential Causes of Autism: the Relationship Between ASD and the Environment and Alternative Approaches to Support Individuals with ASD

Presenters: Martha Herbert, MD, PhD, Assistant Professor of Neurology at Harvard Medical School; Stacy Shannon, NH Autism Society

Register online www.iod.unh.edu

Or call UNH Institute on Disability at (603) 228-2084



NEW HAMPSHIRE DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL

*Committed To Dignity, Full Rights Of Citizenship, Equal Opportunities, And Full Participation For All
NH Citizens With Developmental Disabilities*

Grants for NH Teens Building Stronger Communities

The New Hampshire Developmental Disabilities Council is offering grants of up to \$500 per project to teens or young adults, ages 14 – 21, who want to make their schools or communities more welcoming to people of all abilities.

Project Teams

In order to apply for a grant, a team or committee must be formed that includes at least one teen or young adult with a disability and one adult support person. In addition, we encourage you to involve other young people, with and without disabilities, to make your project a success. A whole class and their teacher could be involved, or a few students with and without disabilities could work together, along with a faculty member, community volunteer or other support person. Community organizations and teen clubs are encouraged to participate. School affiliation is not required.

Some Ideas for Projects

We are interested in funding projects that address some barrier or challenge that teens or young people with disabilities currently face, or that support young people with disabilities in speaking for themselves. We want to focus on the importance building relationships by taking part in everyday activities with others in their schools and communities. Examples of possible projects are provided below. *These examples should in no way limit what you can do.* In fact, we encourage you to be creative, think beyond these examples and propose a project that will work for you and address a real concern in your community. We will seriously consider funding every promising application we get that promotes the Council's mission of dignity, full rights of citizenship, equal opportunities, and full participation for all New Hampshire citizens with developmental disabilities.

Examples of Projects:

- ◆ Getting students with and without disabilities involved together in extra-curricular community projects or activities.
- ◆ Giving students and teachers the opportunity to recognize the assets of students with disabilities and encourage them to share their gifts.
- ◆ Supporting students with disabilities with whatever is needed to become full, meaningful participants in their IEP meetings.
- ◆ Using education and awareness-raising campaigns to change the way others think about disability.

Getting Help With Your Project

If you think you have a good idea but you cannot find an adult support person, please call us. We may be able to recommend someone in your community. If you have questions or would like an application, please call or email:

NH Developmental Disabilities Council
The Walker Building, 21 South Fruit Street, Suite #22
Concord, NH 03301-2451
Telephone: (603) 271-3236

DISABILITIES RIGHTS CENTER, INC.

18 Low Avenue, Concord, NH 03301-4971

Voice and TTY: (603) 228-0432 ♦ 1-800-834-1721 ♦ FAX: (603) 225-2077

TTY access also through NH Relay Service: 1-800-735-2964 (Voice and TTY)

E-mail: advocacy@drcnh.org ♦ Website: www.drcnh.org

"Protection and Advocacy System for New Hampshire"

The Disabilities Rights Center is dedicated to eliminating barriers to the full and equal enjoyment of civil and other legal rights for people with disabilities.

INSTITUTE ON DISABILITY/UCED – UNIVERSITY OF NH

10 West Edge Drive, Suite 101, Durham, NH 03824-3522

Voice and TTY: (603) 862-4320 ♦ Fax: (603) 862-0555 ♦ Website: www.iod.unh.edu

Institute on Disability/UNH – Concord

Concord Center, 10 Ferry Street, Unit 14

Concord, NH 03301

Voice and TTY: (603) 228-2084

Institute on Disability/UNH – Manchester

250 Commercial Street, Suite 4107

Manchester, NH 03101

Phone: (603) 628-7681

The Institute on Disability advances policies and systems changes, promising practices, education and research that strengthen communities and ensure full access, equal opportunities, and participation for all persons.

NH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL

21 South Fruit Street, Suite 22, Room 290

Concord, NH 03301-2451

Phone: (603) 271-3236 ♦ TTY/TDD: 1-800-735-2964 ♦ Website: www.nhddc.com

Dignity, full rights of citizenship, equal opportunity, and full participation for all New Hampshire citizens with developmental disabilities.

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21 South Fruit Street, Suite 22, Room 290

Concord, NH 03301-2451

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