

## Anne Arundel County Department of Social Services

### **"Assessing and Assisting the Disabled"**

#### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Anne Arundel County Department of Social Services developed a program to provide comprehensive vocational assessments for cash assistance applicants and recipients who are disabled adults or parents who care for disabled family members full-time in the home.

Most of these individuals have been denied SSI and SSDI, or have not followed through with applications for those Federal benefit programs. Yet, their physicians certify that they have a medical condition that prevents them from working. At the time the project was started, 32 percent of all cash assistance recipients in Anne Arundel County were categorized as disabled or caring full-time for a disabled family member.

Federal and State time-limits and other penalty policies require that disabled cash assistance recipients either in the formal process of applying for SSI/SSDI, or appealing a denial of SSI/SSDI in order to be "exempt" from job search and from the 60-month lifetime limit. In order to assist disabled customers in finding employment, or receiving treatment, training, therapy or technological accommodation that can lead to employment, our agency refers cash assistance recipients to a contractor, the Chesapeake Career Center, which is a local non-profit partnership between Goodwill Industries of the Chesapeake and a local developmental disabilities service provider, the Providence Center.

Chesapeake Career Center employs vocational assessors, intake staff, job developers and case managers who conduct detailed assessments on the vocational abilities of each referred recipient. A report is sent back to DSS with recommendations for services or for exemption. Home visits, as well as in-office formal norms tests are used for the initial assessments; longer, situational assessments are also recommended as part of the service plan.

CCC meets with the customer for intake within five days of receiving a Job Counselor's referral, and conducts a vocational assessment within 14 days of receiving a referral. The assessment includes physical and psychomotor capacities testing, interests, work history, job seeking skills, and job site modifications analysis. Assessments can also include home visits by a social worker at CCC to investigate and verify the customer's situation.

Recommended services can include programs operated or funded by the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration, the Maryland Department of Rehabilitation Services, and specialized trainings offered by CCC, (such as, hotel/hospitality, retail, custodial, computer/clerical, and sheltered employment sites). Other sources of funding include TANF Work Programs funds, Welfare-to-Work funds, and Workforce Investment Act funds.